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A History of the Agakhani Ismailis



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For page numbers, see the page footer. Page numbers are in 'Page x of y' format
For Reference See Pages: 107, 108

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A HISTORY OF THE AGAKHANI ISMAILIS

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE BENEFICENT, THE COMPASSIONATE

I begin with my gratitude to the Beneficent and the Compassionate,
whose Messages have guided the believers to a straight path.

**"As to those who hold fast by the Book and establish regular prayer; never shall We
suffer the reward of the righteous to perish." Holy Qur'an 7/170**

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1

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INTRODUCTION

The followers of Karim Aga Khan, the "Agakhani Ismailis," are spread out in various parts of the world. They constitute the vast majority, and comprise a controversial group, within the various sub-sects of Ismailis, who in turn form a small minority within the various groups and sects of the Islamic brotherhood. Thus, the Agakhani Ismailis represent a minute proportion, some 0.1 percent, of the Muslim world. However, their fame and profile far exceed their numbers, due primarily to the prominence of the Aga Khan and his family members through their international political, economic, and social status.

Of significance has been their long association with thoroughbred horse racing in Europe; Aga Khan III's weighing in gold, diamonds, and platinum as a gift from his followers; the marriage of Prince Aly Khan Karim Aga Khan's father to renowned actress Rita Hayworth and his role as a leader of Pakistan's delegation to the United Nations; the service of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan in the United Nations as High Commissioner for Refugees; and, most recently, Karim Aga Khan being named Commander of the French Legion of Honour for eminent services to humanity.

It is a common belief that the ancestors of the Agakhani Khojah Ismailis were Hindus and that approximately seven centuries ago they were converted to the Ismaili faith by Pirs (authorized preachers) that came from Persia. The questions often asked are: Were these Pirs Imami Nizari Ismailis? Were they sent to India from Persia by the Ismaili Imams (spiritual leaders)? What was the Islamic Tariqah (persuasion) adopted by these converts at the time of their conversion?

The faith practiced by Ismailis during the golden era of their history the Fatimid period of the Caliphate in Cairo was within the spectrum of the various sects, denominations, and schools of thought that exist in mainstream Islam. This meant that they observed the Shari'ah laws at the peak of their glory. Fatimid Imams built the first university in the world, al-Azhar, which became an institute of repute in the Muslim world, to study the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence, among other subjects. Fatimid Ismailis recited the canonical Islamic prayers in mosques five times a day, as opposed to conventional Ismaili prayers three times a day at present in the Jama`at khanas (literally, place of assembly; in Ismaili terminology, place of worship). During the congregational noon prayers on Fridays, the names of the prevailing Fatimid Imams were mentioned in Khutba (an exhortation or sermon) in Egypt. Like other Muslims, they observed the Fast during the holy month of Ramadhan and performed the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).

It is interesting to learn how the dramatic change occurred that absolved the sect from the requirements of certain edicts of the revealed laws after the fall of the Fatimid dynasty, in the Alamut period. The roots of the Fatimid Ismailis were in the region of the

Middle East where Islam was born. On the other hand, the roots of the majority of the Agakhani Ismailis, who are the Shia Imami Khojah Ismailis, are in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, and their conversion from Hinduism has gone through various phases of proselytization. During the past one and half centuries, the religion of these converts has undergone such drastic changes that the present generation of Agakhani Ismailis is almost totally ignorant of the practices of their forbears only two, three, and four generations ago in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and Africa. The Agakhani Ismailis have made significant progress in the fields of education, commerce, and industry. Spiritually, however, the propagation of esotericism has left the community virtually bereft of the fundamental precepts and concepts of Islam.

Today, only a few elderly Khojahs (Ismaili, Ithna'ashri, and Sunni Khojahs) who have read the literature published during the nineteenth century, such as Ibrat-afza (an autobiography of Aga Khan I in Persian) or its Gujrati translation published in 1861, or those who have heard from their elders the accounts of the second and third proselytizing, can trace back the trails and rediscover the lost heritage.

A study of primary as well as secondary documents, some of them rare and others that have been withdrawn from circulation or that were written for internal circulation in the ancient form of Sindhi script called Khojki, reveals that the process of proselytizing has gone through three distinct stages. The last two are only a century and a half old.

A few Agakhani Ismaili scholars who have compiled a bibliography of Ismaili literature, and others who have access to these documents, are well aware of the fact that the conversion of Hindus to the Ismaili faith has not been firsthand and has gone through more than one phase. But these scholars are also cognizant of the fact that under Article 14 of the Constitution of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims (1986), any Ismaili who prints, publishes, or circulates any material or makes any statement or convenes a meeting or assembly purporting to be on behalf of, or in the name of, or relating to, the Imam, the Ismaili Tariqah, the Jama'at (a congregation or community), and any Ismaili Council or Institution without the written permission of the National Council within whose jurisdiction he or she resides shall be liable to disciplinary action, and the offender can be expelled from the community. It is high time that these kinds of stipulations and restrictions are lifted and that Ismaili scholars have the encouragement and support of community leaders in publishing their findings.

In 1947-48, a couple of Ismaili students and I met the Russian professor Vladimir Alekseevich Ivanov (1886-1970), popularly known as W. Ivanow, and Vice-Chancellor Asaf Ali Asghar Fyzee (1899-1981), a Sulaymani Ismaili, who were the founding members of the Ismaili Society in Bombay, to obtain their permission to translate one of their publications into Gujrati.

In 1946, the Ismaili Society was founded with the aim of promoting independent and critical study of all matters connected with Ismaili faith, which included their literature, history, and philosophy. The Ismaili Society functioned with the financial support and patronage of the late Aga Khan III.

The Society had undertaken a bibliographical survey of Ismaili literature. One and a half decades later, when the work was finally published by the Society in Tehran in 1963, it was in an abridged form. Professor Ivanow scrutinized 929 works, and his analysis of these many documents was published in just 180 pages. Asaf Fyzee, the founding member of the Ismaili Society, wrote, "Everything connected with Ismailism seems to be enveloped in a cloud of mystery and secrecy."

Sixty-three years ago, I was born into an Agakhani Ismaili family where every member of the house over the age of five was made to recite his or her Du'a (a designated ritual prayer) in Gujrati three times a day. A prayer in which one would repeatedly prostrate oneself before a photograph of the Aga Khan and affirm with firm conviction that the photographed mortal was the physical manifestation of Allah upon this earth.

His Highness Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, came to see my mother at a hospital in Southend-on-Sea, England, where I was born. He personally gave me the name by which I am known today. The late Aga Khan was well-known for his wit and uncanny ability to provoke laughter. While giving his blessings, he wittily appointed me as a Kamadia (assistant steward cum accountant) and my (late) elder brother Abdulali who was also born in England as a Mukhi (chief steward cum treasurer) of his London Jama`at. The year was 1928.

As a devout follower of the Aga Khan, my father donated Rs.300,000.00 -- practically eighty percent of his entire wealth -- to the Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee fund. Half a century ago, that was an enormous sum of money. Being the highest donor from India, he received the singular honour of weighing His Highness the Aga Khan (putting plastic boxes full of rented diamonds on the weighing scale) in Bombay, on 10 March 1946. Thereafter, contrary to the general expectations of every believing Ismaili, the downfall of our family began.

My father, who had been in the carpet and textile business, suddenly had to face charges arising out of a small business transaction. He had sold goods meant for export, locally. I was a student at that time but became an accessory for having acted as a delivery boy. Our entire stock of textiles was confiscated by the authorities, who were acting under instructions from the newly independent Indian government. Communal tensions were running high and anti-Muslim sentiments were visible inside and outside of the court house.

Aga Khan had his own tax problems with the government. The authorities were demanding a large sum as taxes on his revenues and funds collected from the Ismaili community. Donors who had donated substantial sums for the Diamond Jubilee were individually investigated and taxed. Aga Khan decided to stay in Europe till the matter was settled by his agents, which did not happen during his lifetime.

The court proceedings were slow and the hearings dragged on for several years. To start a fresh life, I moved to West Pakistan in 1949 with a few hundred rupees in my pocket. A few years later, morally depressed and financially depleted, my father migrated

to East Pakistan. After the partition of India, the Aga Khan had predicted in his private Farmans (authoritative and binding pronouncements) that Dacca and Chittagong would become London and Paris of the East. After losing a portion of his investments, my father moved to East Africa. From there, under the guidance of the Aga Khan, my family relocated to Belgian Congo. Aga Khan's prognostication that Congo would be the last colony in Africa to get its independence was wrong, and within a few years my family had to get out, following the turmoil in that country after independence.

From 1949 to 1975, during my domicile in Pakistan, I diligently served the Ismailia community in various capacities. I kept up the Jama'ati tradition of serving the Hazar (present) Imam with Tan, Man, and Dhan (Body, Mind, and Money). In 1972, I was appointed President of the Ismailia Regional Council for Karachi and Baluchistan by Karim Aga Khan. I held that position till I emigrated to Canada in 1975.

Towards the end of 1982, I published in British Columbia my first book on the ancestry of the Aga Khans. It was entitled From Abraham to Aga Khan. As the years went by, I continued research on the subject of Ismaili literature and history. At the same time I augmented my studies with the revealed messages that are to be found in the Qur'an and the Bible. By the grace of Allah, I got out of my tunnel vision. I could now see my beliefs from a wider perspective. A perspective whose outlook was panoramic and not restricted by inherited, imposed or prescribed thinking. I could now compare with an open mind what I had studied in the past with what I was learning in the present. I began asking questions in private as well as in public, by writing memoranda and pamphlets.

My doubts were strengthened when I discovered that a large number of Ismailis had similar doubts and difficulties in understanding what they were asked to practice. But most of them were observing a double standard. To express their doubts or endorse their feelings in the open was too risky. It could lead to expulsion from or rejection by the Jama'at, which none could afford because of their family ties and business contacts within the community.

My frustrations germinated, but I also stayed within the community. I did not refrain from seeking answers from Agakhani scholars and missionaries at public gatherings as well as in private. I flew to Paris after communicating with Karim Aga Khan's personal secretary hoping to get answers from the highest authority, the Aga Khan, but the promised interview did not take place.

The real change in my attitude came when I discovered to my utter surprise that the Aga Khan is not a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, through the Fatimid Imams, but is a descendant of Hasan, a son of Da'i Muhammad of Alamut, who had proclaimed a kind of spiritual filiation with the Fatimid Imams. I intensified my research on the subject, and compared the data recorded by Ismaili and non-Ismaili historians. My findings got more and more support as I went through fresh documents.

Finally, I decided to write a book based upon my discoveries. Understanding Ismailism A Unique Tariqah of Islam was published at the end of 1988. It was printed and distributed from British Columbia, Canada, a country that promotes and guarantees its citizens the freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication, under its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I was expecting rejoinders in the form of books or memoranda challenging my research, but that did not happen. Instead, something else transpired.

Hardly a week or two passed after the above publication when an announcement was read in all the Jama`at khanas of Canada, asking the members of the Jama`at not to support the author, etc. Shortly thereafter, in December 1988, the honorary secretary of the Aga Khan's Ismaili Council for British Columbia filed a Complaint before the Aga Khan's Conciliation and Arbitration Board for British Columbia. The complainant asked the Board to recommend my expulsion from the Jama`at, under Article 14 of the Ismaili Constitution ordained by Karim Aga Khan.

My lawyers advised me that without going into the merits of the book or its content, the mere fact that I had written a book on Ismaili faith and Aga Khan without obtaining a written permission from the Ismaili Council was sufficient cause for obtaining an order for expulsion from the community under the ordained Constitution. I had not been a practicing Ismaili for the last several years. Professor Peter Lamborn Wilson mentioned in the opening sentence of his review, which was published in the book, that I was a former Ismaili.

In March 1989, I publicly withdrew my oath of allegiance to Karim Aga Khan and at the same time invited him through the media, as well as by a letter, to have an open forum or a public debate at the Royal Albert Hall in London, either personally or through representatives. The offer was not accepted.

At the end of 1989, I wrote 'Understanding the Bible - through Koranic Messages'. It was published at a time in the history of the Middle East when there was a greater need for Jews, Christians, and Muslims - the three children of Abraham - to re-examine their own roots and unite as brothers. The book was reviewed by Tom Harpur, a former professor of the New Testament. Several months later, I was interviewed by Tom Harpur in his nationally televised series Heaven and Hell.

In the middle of 1990, I began collecting books and documents that would assist me in discovering the roots of my inherited beliefs. As a teacher of a religious school, I had heard almost all the Farmans pronounced by the Aga Khans, recited hundreds of Ginans (hymn-like devotional songs that are recited in the Jama`at khanas), and read practically every book of Ismaili history that was published by the Ismailia Association for India. They all led me to believe that the conversion of my ancestors to the Ismaili faith was direct. The Pirs who performed the conversion were Ismailis.

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The data I had now collected told me a different story. I decided to look outside and approached a few families of Sunni Khojahs and Ithna'ashri Khojahs whose ancestors were also converted from Hinduism. They provided me with documents and facts hitherto unknown to me and probably to most Ismailis. A History of the Agakhani Ismailis will serve as the most explicit account of the history of the followers of the Aga Khan and their religious life today.

This book of history is in particular addressed to the mundane everyday readers the laity. I have therefore chosen to furnish bibliographical data for the quoted passages before each quotation, rather than have a consolidated list at the end. The book may also prove to be of interest to non-Ismaili readers and scholars who have, in the words of a professor, "run into a stone wall" or "gotten the run-around" while doing their research on the Ismaili community.

2

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THE ROOTS OF OUR PERSUASIONS

A divine innocence

A captivating smile radiating from the beaming face of a newly born baby gazing at you from its crib is suffused with divine innocence. However, that impeccability and candor are so transient that as soon as the infant grows up, the heavenly naiveté takes its leave and is not seen again. The unblemished purity with which a human mind was divinely conceived and created within the womb of a mother has been tainted. A slate that was once clean and spotless is now delineated with materialistic characters and figures. The shadow of a human being has eclipsed that innocent smile.

From time immemorial, one of the major responsibilities of parenthood has been to enlighten, or to be precise, to influence offspring with certain dictates and precepts. In the process, parents confer upon their wards their views and personal beliefs. Going back, we discover that just as we have, our parents, too, inherited their religious persuasions and beliefs from their parents. A child born into a Christian home may develop his intellect hearing the name of "Lord Jesus" as his benefactor and savior. Another, born next door may enrich his intellect hearing the name of "Shri Rama" and "Shri Krishna". In an Ismaili home an infant hears the name of "Mawla Bapa," a term that refers to their spiritual leader, the Aga Khan.

To extol that revered name and to staunchly defend His glory becomes one of the sacred duties of that child as he or she grows up. This childhood training is so well grounded that even upon maturity, an educated, well-bred, adult individual would very gratifyingly imitate his parents.

A sublime act

During my high school days in Bombay, I often walked home from my school. My home was in a Muslim quarter and the government school was in a crowded residential-cum-business area that was predominantly a Hindu neighborhood. In this journey by foot, I swam through the ceaseless flow of ethnically diverse human traffic that dashed in either direction, at a brisk pace. Occasionally, a freely roaming gauwa mata (mother cow) would stop her stride, raise her tail, and begin discharging its urine.

As a young Muslim, I watched with a feeling of awe and surprise as the civilized, urbane Hindu men and women that were walking alongside me suddenly surged forward and placed their cupped hands under the elevated tail, to catch a spoonful or two of that fluid. These cultured, devout, high caste Hindus would then routinely raise their hands and release that sacred liquid into their wide open mouths. After chanting a few words and rubbing their wet palms on the back of that holy cow, these sophisticated individuals would resume their journey with joy at having caught that pious liquid in time. A mind

that has developed in a non-Hindu home can only try to comprehend, but can never fully understand the sacrosanctity of these acts or the feelings of elation, gratification, and bliss that filled the hearts and minds of these pious performers, who have dauntlessly followed the footsteps of their ancestors in this twentieth century.

Our affiliations

For the great majority of us the choosing of a religion has been a matter of family tradition and the geographical location of our birthplace. Had a person been born in South America, his chances of being a Brahmin (a high-caste Hindu) rather than a Catholic would have been one in a million or probably none at all. It can be said that in most cases the religion that we follow is not through our personal discovery but an imposed family persuasion. Yet we protect that persuasion as well as the beliefs and practices that are associated with it with all our strength and vigor. They have now become our beliefs and our practices.

When a person migrates from the place of his birth, he accepts new cultures, speaks new languages, and adopts new social practices that ameliorate, or are better suited to, his new environment. But when the subject is religion, he resents and takes exception to new influences, beneficial or otherwise. He would proudly maintain that his religion is holier than thine. There can be no foreign philosophy or perception worth trading with his.

When someone points a finger at the enigmatic dogmas that are associated with his religion, he often tries to defend them for the sake of defending. And when he fails to do a good job of it, he estranges himself from that individual, rather than disassociate himself from the identified paradoxes. But when it is his turn to point a finger at their paradoxical dogmas, he expects instant submission from his opponents. He expects everyone but himself to be rational and logical while discussing religion.

The roots of our truth

For all practical purposes, we assume that the patriarchal affiliation that was enjoined, prescribed, or imposed upon us by reason of birth or fate has to be the whole truth and the only truth worth defending. The most unfortunate part of this whole scenario is that the very notion of such an assumption was also imposed upon us by the same people who handed over to us our religion. What we claim as "our" truth is indeed a personal truth, but we cannot be positive and confident of its veracity unless and until we track its roots through history and discover the source.

The roots of our inherited fanaticism could be centuries old. Most probably we do not even know the name or the historical background of that individual ancestor who discovered our religion or was converted to believing what we believe today. A sincere effort to trace the origin of our persuasions and the history of conversion could be a rewarding experience.

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"Angootha chhap"

Ismaili historians have recorded that the majority of the progenitors of Agakhani Ismailis were very poor and came from the rural areas of Sind, Gujrat, Kathiawar, and Kutch. Before their conversion, seven centuries ago, they belonged to a middle low-caste Hindu society that was constantly oppressed by the high-caste Hindu priests, landlords, and local merchants. In those days, the rural population in India consisted mostly of uneducated individuals that would fall within the category of "angootha chhap", meaning the illiterate individuals that place thumb impressions on written documents in lieu of signatures. These long-suffering, docile human beings had developed the habit of meekly placing their thumb impressions, with an unsuspecting mind, on any document that was put before them by their benefactors. Besides, they had no other alternative or means at their disposal to ascertain the authenticity of the documents without offending their masters.

Similarly, these submissive ancestors with no access to any literature, would place their trust in any story that was narrated to them by their elders or religious Gurus. The base of their beliefs was a blind faith and reliance upon these individuals. They had built their traditional, cultural, and religious convictions based upon Riwayah (oral transmissions of traditional stories) that were being told and retold with a twist, generation after generation.

Serve with an unsuspecting mind

Ismaili literature, like much other religious literature, is full of epic stories and folklore depicting the superhuman power of the Pirs and Imams. Not long ago, all these legends of miracles (e.g., lowering of the sun by Pir Shams in the city of Multan) were devoutly respected and regarded as historical facts by the devoted ancestors. Many unsuspecting minds would, even today, place their total trust on legendary supernatural feats of Hazrat `Ali that are vividly narrated in the various Farmans made nearly a century ago by the then Aga Khan.

Often an Ismaili would quote a popular verse from a Ginan to prevail over a logically sound argument or win a losing debate. The verse teaches: "Bhore mane s'revo", meaning; "Serve with a mind that is unsuspecting." This reminds me of a well-known Christian admonition which has a similar advice for those who express their skepticism of the Trinity document. It says: "He who tries to understand the mystery fully will lose his mind, but he who denies the Trinity will lose his soul."

Holy Qur'an: The criterion

An English translation of the Holy Qur'an and a detailed commentary thereof by Abdullah Yusuf Ali enjoys a unique place in Islamic society. I have taken the liberty of quoting his translation and the commentary at the end of each chapter of this book to convey the revealed message that stands as a criterion for all mankind.

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So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the faith;

(establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern
on which He has made mankind:
no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah:
that is the standard religion:
but most among mankind understand not. Holy Qur'an 30/30

Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali:

As turned out from the creative hand of God, man is innocent, pure, true, free, inclined to right and virtue, and endowed with true understanding about his own position in the Universe and about God's goodness, wisdom, and power. That is his true nature, just as the nature of a lamb is to be gentle and of a horse is to be swift. But man is caught in the meshes of customs, superstitions, selfish desires, and false teaching. This may make him pugnacious, unclean, false, slavish hankering after what is wrong or forbidden, and deflected from the love of his fellow-men and the pure worship of the One True God. The problem before spiritual Teachers is to cure this crookedness, and to restore human nature to what it should be under the Will of God.

THE PIRS OF THE KHOJAHS

The conversion of Hindus in India

Within a century after the passing away of the Prophet of Islam, Muslims expanded their realm as far as India. Under the leadership of Muhammad ibn Qasim, Arabs conquered Sind in 712. Thereafter, Islam spread deeper into India through subsequent conquests by the Ghaznavids and others. Islamic rule in India reached its peak under the celebrated Muslim dynasty of the Great Moghuls (1526-1858), who were noted for their cultural refinement and architectural achievements, and for the blending of their Persian heritage with Indian culture.

On the other hand, the Da`wah (literally, summon, invitation) activities of Islam - the conversion of Hindus - was carried out by the Muslim scholars and Da'is (literally, summoners, religious propagandists). Along with Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi came the famous Muslim scientist and genius Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973-1048) to India. He learnt Sanskrit and became a bridge between the two cultures. Al-Biruni translated the Hindu classic named Patanjali Yoga into Arabic and wrote a book called Kitab al-Hind, describing Hindu philosophy and customs. Muslim Da'is belonged to various Islamic sects and schools of thought, but the majority of them were Sunni Muslims.

The conversion of the Khojahs

Six to nine centuries ago, a significant number of Hindus from the subcontinent of India, especially those living in Kashmir, Punjab, and Sind, and on the western coast of India, embraced Islam. One such group was converted by a Muslim Da'i named Shaykh Sadr ad-Din (leader of the faith). Ismailis call him by the name of Pir Sadr-din. From

Turkey to India, this Persian title Pir is used in preference to the Arabic word Shaykh. Pir Sadr-din gave these newly converted Gujrati, Kutchhi, and Sindhi-speaking Muslims the laqab (honorific title) Khawajah, meaning an honorable person, and named their persuasion Sat-panth (true path). As time went by the word Khawajah became Khojah and the community became known as Sat-panthi Khojahs, or simply Khojah Muslims. But, it is very important to understand that these Sat-panthi Khojahs were mainly Sunni Khojahs as we shall soon observe.

Prior to the arrival of the Pirs of the Khojahs, there had come to India many Ismaili Da'is from Persia, but they were mostly Qirmatis (Qarmatians) who in those days were commonly called Malahida (impious heretics) by their foes. During a peak period of the Fatimid dynasty, Ismaili Da'is such as al-Sijistani, al-Haytham, and Jamal bin Shayban had spread the Ismaili Da'wah from Khurasan to Multan. But it was short lived in India. When Mahmud Ghaznavi conquered Northern India, he imprisoned Ismaili ruler Abu'l-Futuh Daud ibn Nasr and ruthlessly killed Ismailis in Sind and Multan. An Ismaili author, Ghulamali Allana, writes in 'Ginans of Ismaili Pirs' that Al-Haytham, a nephew of ibn Hawshab, was the one who started the work of Ismaili Da'wah in Sind and converted the ruler of Sind to Ismaili faith. This was the dynasty of Soomras, who ruled Sind for over 300 years. Allana recorded that when Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi invaded Sind, he mercilessly butchered thousands of Ismailis, and with that came the end of Ismaili rule in Sind. Dr. John Norman Hollister has recorded in *The Shi'a of India* (2nd ed., 1979, p. 347), based upon recent researches of M. Abdul Halim Sharar and Syed Hashimi's publication *The Arab Rule in Sind* (pp. 221-22), that Sumras (Soomras) "were Jewish converts to Islam who, coming to Sind from Iraq, adopted the Qarmatian articles of faith and held power over the province of Sind until the middle of the eighth century. H."

Pir Satgur Nur

Based upon legends, some historians have placed the conversion of the Khojahs as early as the ninth century by a Da'i named Nur-ud-Din (light of the faith). Ismaili missionary Abualy A. Aziz records in *A Brief History of Ismailism*, (Toronto, 1985, p. 114) that he was the fifteenth Pir of Ismailis. His name was Sayyid Mohammed. Nooruddi'n was not his name but a title he died in 487 a.h. (1094 a.d.). Others historians have placed the arrival of this so called Ismaili Pir in India during the period of the fourth grand master of Alamut, Hasan 'ala dhikrihis-salaam (d. 1166). T. W. Arnold says that he arrived in Gujrat during the reign of Sidhraj Jai Sing (1094-1143). F. L. Faridi says, based upon another legend, that he arrived in Gujrat during the reign of Bhima II (1179-1242). Dr. G. Allana writes that he came after Al-Haytham. Thus the legendary dates vary from the ninth to the thirteenth century.

The name of this Da'i in Ismaili literature is Pir Satgur Nur. Various miracles are ascribed to this legendary preacher by Ismaili authors, such as making Hindu gods and goddesses (statues of stones) dance at his command. The claims for Pir Satgur Nur being deputed by an Ismaili Imam from Persia are conflicting and cannot be substantiated.

John Norman Hollister records in 'The Shi'a Of India' (p. 351), that based upon the date of the Pir's death recorded on his tomb and the claims made about him, the Pir "would have been over three hundred years old!"

Professor W. Ivanow concludes in 'The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat' (p. 59): "It must be frankly admitted that we know absolutely nothing about the date at which the Pir [Satgur Nur] settled or died at Nawsari, who he was, and what religion he really preached."

Pir Shams of Multan

Other traditions have tried to attribute the conversion of the Khojahs to a Muslim saint named Awliya Shah Shams-ud-Din of Multan, Punjab (d. 1276). But history records that this famous Muslim saint, to whom Ismailis refer as Pir Shams, had not visited Gujrat, Kutchh, or Kathiawar during his lifetime, and the majority of the Khojah Ismailis have their roots in these districts.

Today, the majority of historians agree that the development of the Khojah sect was greatly influenced by Pir Sadr-din and his son Pir Hasan Kabiruddin (Shaykh Kabir ad-Din). Pir Sadr-din was the one that gave the Khojah community its name. This Khojah ancestry is the root of almost all the Agakhani Ismailis of Indo-Pakistan origin, who have since spread all over the globe. One has also to bear in mind that it is also the root of Khojah Shi'ah Ithna'ashries and Khojah Sunni Muslims of Indo-Pakistan origin.

Khojah Agakhani Ismailis claim that Pir Sadr-din and his mentor Pir Shams of Multan were Imami Nizari Ismailis. Sunni Khojahs claim that the Pirs were Sunni Muslims and their converts were observing the traditions (Sunna) of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace. Khojah Ithna'ashries claim that the forefathers of Agakhani Ismailis were following Ithna'ashri rites and rituals. Even the ancestors of Karim Aga Khan that came from Persia were strictly observing Ithna'ashri rites and rituals. These rituals were gradually abrogated and systematically abolished during the Imamate of Aga Khan III.

Today, there are thousands of descendants of the original converts and adherents of Shah Shams in Pakistan, India, Tibet, and Kashmir who regularly visit the shrine of their Awliya. These devotees of Shah Shams are known as Shamsi. A vast majority of them follow the Sunni Tariqah of Islam, and the rest are Ithna'ashries. With the exception of a few families in Punjab and the Northwest Frontier province, there are no Ismaili Shamsis in India or Pakistan. Noorum-Mubin, a history book (1951 ed., p. 330) written by an Ismaili author acknowledges that the majority of the converts of Pir Shams now belong to the Ahle Sunnat Jama'at meaning, belong to the community of Sunni Muslims.

Khojah is a term used to describe a caste

Recently, the centennial of a widely read Gujrati monthly, Rahe Najat (path of salvation), was celebrated by the Khojah Ithna'ashries. A special booklet paying homage

to its first editor, Haji Gulam Ali Haji Ismail, popularly known as Haji Naji (the saved Haji), was published and printed by NASIMCO (Organization of North American Shi'ah Ithna-ashri Muslim Communities), Toronto, Canada.
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Professor Abdulaziz A. Sachedina of the University of Virginia writes in this booklet (p. 4):

It is important to stress the basic characteristic of the Khoja community whose members retained their caste ideas inherited from their Hindu ancestors for a long time due to the necessity of posing as Hindus. However, this caste identity has no relationship with Islam. In fact, it is correct to say that there is nothing like "Khojaism" that competes for loyalty with "Shi'ism" in this community. A Khoja is a Khoja only by right of birth. It is a term used to describe a caste and as such even if a Khoja changes his religion he still remains a Khoja.

When did the "Khojahs" become "Ismailis"?

If you happen to meet an Agakhani Ismaili whose roots are in India, and ask him about the conversion of his ancestors, he would very likely tell you that his forefathers were Hindus and converted as Khojah Muslims. If you ask him how these Khojahs became Ismailis, he will most probably tell you that as years went by, through change in nomenclature the Khojah Muslims became known as Shi'ah Imami Ismaili Muslims. Alternatively he may reply that the Pirs that converted the ancestors were sent to India by the Nizari Ismaili Imams and the converts were Shi'ah Imami Ismailis since the day of their conversion, but were known as Khojahs.

Is this a legendary belief or a historical reality? Were these Pirs sent to India by the Nizari Ismaili Imams? If so, by which Imam and in what century? In the past, non-Ismaili authors had raised such questions and cast their doubts on the recorded data. But in the last two decades Ismaili scholars have discovered evidence that has obliged them to raise these questions in their theses and articles. Furthermore, the data uncovered by these scholars comes from Ismaili literature. The majority of Ismailis are unaware of these recent findings, and if they read them, they would be doing so for the first time.

Memoirs of Aga Khan and Shah Islam Shah

In 1954, Aga Khan III published his Memoirs through Cassell and Company Ltd., London. On p. 181, he writes:

In India, certain Hindu tribes were converted by missionaries sent to them by my ancestor, Shah Islam Shah, and took the name of Khojas; a similar process of conversion occurred in Burma as recently as the nineteenth century.
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Who was this ancestor of Aga Khan named Shah Islam Shah?

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Ismaili history tells us that his full name was Sayyid Ahmed Islam Shah and he was the thirtieth Ismaili Imam. Islam Shah died in Kahak in 1423 or 1424 (fifteenth century). Until recently, the birth year of Islam Shah was not recorded by Ismaili historians. Mumtaz Tajdin, an Ismaili scholar from Pakistan, records in *Genealogy of The Aga Khan* (Karachi, 1990) the birth of Shah Islam Shah in Daylam in 1334 (fourteenth century). While doing their dissertations on the subject of Ginans, Ismaili scholars have discovered that Pir Sadr-din and his mentor Pir Shams were living in the "thirteenth and twelfth" centuries, whereas Shah Islam Shah was born in the "fourteenth" century. This regression of 200 years casts a serious doubt on the authenticity of the aforementioned claim made by the Aga Khan.

As for "a similar process of conversion" taking place in Burma, there is no evidence or record of any such process having taken place at any time in the history of Burma. There are hardly any Burmese Ismailis.

Noorum-Mubin -- a recommended history book

In 1936, Aga Khan III completed 50 years of his Imamate (spiritual leadership). To commemorate this occurrence, Ismailis living in India and Africa collected funds and weighed their Imam in gold first in India and thereafter in Africa. On this occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebrations in India, a book of Ismaili history was released with fanfare. It was written in Gujrati by an Ismaili author and printed in Bombay (1935) by the press department of Aga Khan's institution for religious propaganda, called Recreation Club. Aga Khan personally recommended that the members of his Jama'at read this book, which glorified him, his ancestors, and the Ismaili Pirs. This highly recommended book was called Noorum-Mubin (manifest light). The author, Alimohammad Janmohammad Chunara, has interpreted the title of his book in English as *The Sacred Cord of God* and has described his book as "A Glorious History of Ismaili Imams." Noorum-Mubin is a voluminous book with over 800 pages. It was revised and reprinted three times. It has now been out of print for the last several decades and can be found in only a handful of Ismaili homes.

Pir Sadr-din was a disciple of Pir Shams

Noorum-Mubin records that before Pir Sadr-din started his mission, he took his religious training in Multan from Pir Shams. It also records that Pir Sadr-din, with the help of two sons of Pir Shams, built the famous Mazar (mausoleum) of Pir Shams that is located near the city of Multan and is a historical landmark of Punjab.

It is easy to establish the period of Pir Shams's mission in India since these records are preserved by the custodian of his mausoleum. Similarly, the faith Pir Shams preached can also be determined from his followers living in Punjab, Kashmir, and Tibet. Once these

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two things are established, it is not difficult to know the period of Pir Sadr-din's mission and his persuasion.

Awliya Shah Shams ad-Din, whom the Ismailis call Pir Shams, came to Multan from Afghanistan in 1201. He was a contemporary of Shaykh Bahaoddin Zakariyya (d. 1276) and Shaykh Fakhroddin Ibrahim al-Iraqi (d. 1289). Shah Shams died in 1276. His converts, as recorded earlier and acknowledged by the author of Noorum-Mubin are mostly Sunni Muslims.

Since Pir Sadr-din was a disciple of Pir Shams, it is inconceivable that Pir Sadr-din could have adopted and preached a Tariqah (persuasion) of Islam that would be diametrically opposed to that of his spiritual mentor. The relationship that existed between these two Muslim saints also supports the claim made by Sunni Khojachs in 1866, before Justice Arnould in the High Court of Bombay, that Pir Sadr-din came from Multan (and not from Persia). He was a Sunni 'alim and his converts were Sunni Khojachs, not Ismaili Khojachs.

Hasina M. Jamani, an Ismaili scholar from India

It is very fascinating to read what Hasina Jamani has discovered during her studies at the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University. In her thesis entitled *Brahm Prakash: A Translation and Analysis*, she writes (p. 24):

With regard to the period of Pir Shams' da'wa activities in the Sub-continent, there are apparently three versions. The first is a Shajra <genealogical tree> found in the custody of the mutawalli [custodian] of the shrine of Pir Shams in Uchh, Multan. The Shajra says that Shams al-Din was born in Ghazni [Afghanistan] on the 17th Rajab 560/1165 i.e., about a hundred years before the fall of Alamut. The Shajra makes him come to Multan in 598/1201 and permits him to live till 675/1276.

The second version is obtained from the ginans attributed to Shams al-Din himself.... Surbhan Vel, one of the longer ginans attributed to Shams al-Din, mentions his arrival in Samvat 1175/1118. Yet, in another of his ginans, Chandrabhan Vel, his arrival in Chenab is given as Samvat 1200/1143.

However, when we come across the name of the Imam on whose behalf Shams al-Din is supposed to have carried on da'wa activity, the name of Imam Qasim Shah [d. 1370] is mentioned. Imam Qasim Shah belongs to the post Alamut period.

Alamut, as is well-known, was razed by the Mongols in 1256, and after that the history of the Nizaris and their Imams enters a new stage. The child of the last Imam of Alamut, Rukn al-Din KhurShah, is said to be

Shams al-Din. In the Ismaili genealogy Qasim Shah is the name of the Imam who succeeded Imam Shams.

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Thus, if Qasim Shah was the Imam of the time, then the period of Shams' activity would extend into the 14th century.

The above observations by Jamani clearly indicate that Pir Shams (d. 1276) could not have been sent to India by an Ismaili Imam, since the alleged Imam on whose behalf Pir Shams is supposed to have carried on the Da`wah, died nearly a century later in 1370. By the same inference Pir Shams could not have been the author of these Ginans and Garbis because Imam Qasim Shah whose name is mentioned in these compositions became Imam in 1310, that is to say nearly thirty-four years after the death of Pir Shams, the alleged author.

Pir Shams - author of 'Gujrati' compositions?

Ismaili history records that Pir Shams was born in Persia. He came to Punjab via Badakhshan, Tibet, and Kashmir. He lived and died in Punjab (Multan). Ismaili historians have not recorded the Pir's residence in Gujrat, Kutchh, or Kathiawar, where the Gujrati language is spoken. Nonetheless, Ismaili literature has over 2000 verses of Ginans and Garbis, the authorship of which is attributed to Pir Shams. Almost all of them are in the Gujrati language with the exception of a few in Multani.

The questions often asked by Ismailis are:

1. Why did Pir Shams compose thousands of verses of Ginans and Garbis in Gujrati when his followers were mostly Punjabis, Tibetans, and Kashmiris, who did not speak Gujrati?
2. Where and when did Pir Shams learn a language that is spoken only in Gujrat and Kathiawar?
3. Who wrote down these Gujrati Ginans in Multan or transmitted them orally, generation after generation?

Pir Sadr-din was a Haji

Professor W. Ivanow writes in his book *The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat* (p. 34): "He [Pir Sadr-din] is locally [at the place of his burial] spoken of as Haji Sadr Shah; the tomb is without any inscription."

The title Haji indicates that Sadr-din Shah (Pir) had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. It is a well-known fact that Ismailis do not perform Hajj. Karim Aga Khan's Didar (glimpse) is a Hajj for an Agakhani Ismaili. "According to Ismailian ta'wil,

hajj or pilgrimage, was interpreted to mean a visit to the Imam." writes Hollister in *The Shi'a Of India* (p. 390). Continuing further he writes (pp. 391-92):

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Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina is almost never undertaken by Khojas.... In 1896 Agha Jangi Shah, an uncle of the present Agha Khan, and his son, were killed by assassins at Jeddah while they were on their way as pilgrims to Mecca. The murderers were said to be staunch followers of the Agha Khan. They were arrested and kept in custody in Jeddah, and were later found dead at their place of confinement, having taken poison. No information is available, but the incident has allowed the suspicion that it grew from opposition to this pilgrimage which the sect condemns.

Al-Hajj ("the greater pilgrimage"), the canonical pilgrimage, is one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam. To condemn it would be to condemn the faith itself. Every believing Muslim that has the means should make the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. I have yet to see a single Farman of the present or past Agha Khan asking his followers to perform al-Hajj, al-'Umrah or az-Ziyarah of Mecca, as a part of their obligatory duties.

Abdulaziz Sachedina - a Khojah scholar

Professor Abdulaziz A. Sachedina writes in *Rahenajat* (pp. 8-9):

...it is correct to say that from the time of their conversion to Islam from the Hindu Shakti Marg until 1860s because of the influence of the Sunni mullas, who had officiated at their marriages, deaths, and other such occasions, Khojas were responsive to the Sunni school of thought. The beginning of the "Khoja awakening" in the first half of the 19th century ushered the community to the revival of their religious identity as a consequence of their increased level of religious knowledge.

...Before this period, as evidenced by the 1847 court case, the Khojas had no knowledge about their Shi'ism; nor did they know the difference between the Shi'i and the Sunni schools of thought. Thus, when Agha Hasan 'Ali Shah in 1861 required the Khojas to declare their Shi'ism, the community had no hesitation in signing the document declaring their Shi'ite identity. The Shi'i mulla had prepared the community for this declaration of allegiance. And, the Agha Khan and his son 'Ali Shah, led the community in their prayers and commemorative gatherings to mourn the martyrs of Karbala, regularly. These and other Iranian religious practices were certainly based on the Ithna 'Ashri school of thought.

Note: The quoted term "Until 1860s" means, until two decades after the arrival of the Agha Khan I to India, "Khojas were responsive to the Sunni school of thought."

Mawlana Rumi and Shams Tabriz

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Mawlana Jalal ad-Din Rumi (1207-73) was a great mystic and dervish in Islamic history. At the age of thirty-nine, he became a student of Shams ad-Din at-Tabriz (d. 1247). Rumi is well-known for his Mathnawi, a six-volume work of mystical Sufi poems in Persian, many of which were written out of love for his spiritual mentor, Shams Tabriz. In his Farmans, Aga Khan III had quoted the philosophical messages of Mawlana Rumi and asked Ismailis to read Mathnawi to understand the philosophy of "our" religion.

Quoting a verse from the Mathnawi, the author of Noorum-Mubin (p. 316, rev. ed., 1951) claims that the name "Shams" mentioned in the quoted verse refers to the twenty-eighth Ismaili Imam, Shamsuddin Muhammad. The author also claims (p. 309) that Shams Tabriz, the spiritual mentor of Rumi, was son of the twenty-sixth Ismaili Imam, Allauddin Muhammad.

Ithna'ashri scholars have questioned these claims and pointed out that Mawlana Rumi and Shams Tabriz were both Ithna'ashries. Mawlana Rumi referred to the "Twelve Imams" of the Ithna'ashries in his Mathnawi. And, on his Mausoleum are inscribed the names of Ithna'ashri Imams.

When Aga Khan III asked his followers to read the Mathnawi, to understand the philosophy of "our" religion, he was in fact promoting the ideology of the religion of his father and grand-father, who were Sufi Ithna'ashries.

Confidential Report, Canada - 1987

In the last two decades, young Ismaili scholars and Waezins (missionaries) who have done extensive research on the subjects of the history of Ismaili Pirs, their Ginans and Ismaili beliefs have been refuting in their lectures the erroneous and baseless claims made in the past by Ismaili authors concerning the lives of these so-called "Ismaili" Pirs, the periods of their missions, the mythological concepts of equating 'Ali with Hindu deities that are associated with these Pirs, etc., whereas, elderly missionaries have been strongly advocating these ancestral beliefs.

Most of these refutations are not published for public reading. One of the reasons is that the majority of these students/waezins are financed and/or sponsored by Aga Khan's Institutions. After the completion of their studies, many of these scholars look forward to joining these institutions or their affiliated organizations as full-time paid research scholars, teachers or missionaries. However, the refutations do surface from time to time, either in their theses or during question-and-answer sessions at seminars or private lectures.

Mehboob Kamadia of Toronto published in 1987 a 175-page Confidential Report on Propagation of Anti Ismaili Elements by Scholars. He described the activities of a dozen or so young Ismaili scholars and missionaries. Copies of the report, with a covering letter recommending disciplinary action to be taken against the listed individuals, were mailed to various Ismaili institutions and the community leaders.

Kamadia's frustrations mounted when his report and the subsequent reminders got no satisfactory response or action from higher authorities. The ultimate objective of the hierarchy has been to suppress, rather than to confront, such sensitive issues in public, especially when professors from Western universities are assisting these scholars in their research.

"Contumacious treason against God"

**Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him;
but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth;
to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin
most heinous indeed. Holy Qur'an 4/48**

Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali:

Just as in an earthly kingdom the worst crime is that of treason, as it cuts at the very existence of that State, so in the spiritual kingdom, the unforgivable sin is that of contumacious treason against God by putting up God's creatures in rivalry against Him. This is rebellion against the essence and source of spiritual life. It is what Plato would call the "lie in the soul." But even here, if the rebellion is through ignorance, and is followed by sincere repentance and amendment, God's Mercy is always open (iv. 17).

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DEVIATION FROM THE TEACHINGS OF SADR-DIN

Ginans - the only link with Islam

Ismaili historians have recorded that Pir Sadr-din's profession was to write and sell copies of the Holy Qur'an. The profession was also carried on by his descendants. This tells us that the Pir and his descendants were well versed with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. After learning the local dialects, they began composing devotional songs in the local tongue and reciting them. The knowledge of Islam and the messages of the Qur'an were thus brought to the converts in their own native language, through Ginans (devotional songs) and Garbis (choral dance songs). These songs were transmitted orally, from generation to generation.

Writing and marketing of the religious songs composed by their ancestors became a profession of some of the descendants of the Pirs. These descendants were respectfully called Sayyids (literally, liege lord). The profession supplemented their income and complemented their mission of conversion. Later on, unknown Sayyids, poets, philosophers, teachers and others began adding their own compositions (songs) to the original collection.

In the late 1940s, a Head Master (head teacher) of my religious night school in Bombay, whose name was Hussein Gulamhussain Hussaini (pen-name "Musst"; literally, in high spirit), added his own composition to the collection. The Ginan is entitled Par karo beda Guruji. This questions an affirmation made by Ismaili scholar Azim Nanji in the Ismaili magazine Hikmat, of July 1991 (p. 27), that "By the early part of this century, the corpus of the ginan tradition, having accumulated over several centuries, became stabilized and no new compositions have since been added."

A collection of canonical and non-canonical Ginans has been the base of Agakhani Ismailis' Islamic beliefs and traditions. This was their only link with Islam in their own native tongue. Even today, it serves well for the vast majority of Ismailis who do not have the inclination to read the Holy Qur'an or its translation. In the religious classes, usually conducted within the premises of the Jama`at khanas, Ismaili children are taught to recite and memorize verses of the Ginans rather than the verses of the Qur'an.

Because corpus of the Ginans, accumulated over several centuries, has been the primary media of proselytizing, it is essential to study the history of the accumulation and publication of Ginans, the various categories of the Ginans, and the process of editing of these Ginans in the early part of this century in order to understand the second and third phases of proselytizing.

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Today, looking at the past, one can well imagine the possibilities for proselytizing a community whose only link with Islam was through a secondary source (Ginans) that

was in circulation by oral transmission over a period of several centuries. Ashiqueali H. Hussain, President of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan (1983), writes in the foreword of *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs* by G. Allana that it was only in the seventeenth century that the first hand-written documents and manuscripts of the Ginans were available.

Three categories of Ginans

The Ismailia Association for India, which has been a pioneer in the research of Ginans, has classified the authorship of the Ginans into three categories:

1. Authorized Ginans composed by appointed Pirs
2. Devotional Songs composed by known Sayyids
3. Devotional Songs composed by unknown Sayyids

The last classification tells us that Songs (not Ginans) composed by unknown authors have been added to the corpus of the Ismaili Ginans.

Next to the obedience of Imam's Farmans comes the compliance with the preaching of the Ginans, for an Ismaili. Abiding by the verses of Ginans, whose authorship is not known, is an unconventional, strange custom.

Caution for the readers of the Ginans

In 1969, the Ismailia Association for India published a Gujarati series entitled *Collection of Ginans*. In its introductory notes the publisher has issued an astounding caution to the readers:

It should be borne in mind that many Ismaili poets, philosophers and 'Bhagats' [devout] have written songs and propagated the true path of Ismailism. Similarly, Sayyids have also composed Ginans and propagated the faith. These compositions have been preserved in our religious literature. We have only to adopt the preaching that are within these compositions. But, the Ginans of these composers cannot be given the same "weight" as those composed by the authorized Pirs that were nominated by Imam-e-Zaman.

Agakhani Ismailis who have been reciting Ginans in their Jama'at khanas from childhood are mostly unaware of the above categories or the addition of "Songs" within the corpus of "Ginans." Besides, it is practically impossible for an average Ismaili to separate the "Songs" from the "Ginans," because they all are published by the Ismailia Association under the nomenclature of Ginans. Similarly, it is not possible to separate the "Edited" Ginans from the "Unedited" Ginans. The process of editing has continued to this day.

Editing of the Ginans

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In the last two decades, the Ismailia Association for Pakistan has published several collections of Ginans after editing the verses and making them conducive to the climate prevailing in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The office-holders of the Ismailia Association for Canada have objected to this practice of her sister association. The Ismailia Association for Pakistan has mentioned in the introductory notes that the work of editing was officially entrusted to them at a conference in Paris (1975) that was chaired by Karim Aga Khan and maintains that the editing has been done in accordance with the guidelines provided at the conference.

After a generation or two, the Ginans that will survive will be fully edited to confirm with the present Ismaili beliefs and, the others will be lost for ever.

Ivanow's work went “out of print”

Professor W. Ivanow is regarded by Western scholars as one of the leading authorities on Ismaili literature and history. After his migration to Bombay from St. Petersburg, Russia, Ivanow devoted his time to research and travel looking for primary documents and manuscripts on Ismaili history and doctrine.

In his Farmans to Ismailis, Aga Khan III lavishly praised Ivanow, “a Christian cleric” and Asaf Ali A. Fyzee, “a Sulaymani Bohra” for their research and study of Ismaili literature. Professor Ivanow's works were mostly published by the Ismaili Society, founded in Bombay in 1946. In those days the professor was in the good books of the Aga Khan. Ivanow had translated into English a short (unfinished) treatise in Persian on the spirit of the fundamental principles of Ismailis, written by Aga Khan III's elder brother (Pir) Shihabu'd-din Shah al-Husayni.

In 1957 and 1958, Ivanow was financed by a private “Study Group” in Mombasa, Kenya, headed by C. K. R. Paroo and M. H. Rashid, in exploring the historical site of Alamut. The aim of the expedition was to uncover the mystery surrounding to the founder of Alamut, Hasan bin Sabbah (The Old Man of the Mountain), and his successors, especially the enigmatic Grand Master, Hasan `ala dhikrihis- salam (Hasan II).

Professor Ivanow's independent research, published in Tehran in 1960, did not support Ismaili beliefs. The publication was entitled Alamut and Lamasar. Ivanow wrote (p. 25):

It would be too long to go into details of the story, but when Kiya Muhammad, the son and successor of Kiya Buzurg-Ummid [successor to Hasan bin Sabbah], died in 557/1162, he was succeeded by the person, who was officially regarded as the son of Kiya Muhammad, but later recognized as the Imam, Khudawand Hasan 'ala dhkiri-hi's-salam.

This kind of reporting, specifically the one that had challenged the genealogy of their Imam, was unacceptable to the community leaders. When Ivanow continued to write

unfavorably about Ismaili history and literature, most of his publications suddenly went “out of print.”

We learn from Professor Ivanow's later publications that some of the manuscripts that he had translated as Ismaili literature were in fact plagiarized Ithna'ashri documents, passed on to him by Ismailis as works of their Pirs and Imams.

“Ginans composed at much later date” — Ivanow

On the subject of Ginans, W. Ivanow writes in one of his out-of-print books, *Ismaili Literature*, published by the Ismaili Society, Tehran, 1963, under the heading “The Literature of the Khojas and Sat-panthis in India” (p. 174):

It is quite possible to think that what is now in existence is the result of a process of selection which was at work for a long time. The gnans, of which it chiefly consists, were never built into a “canonical version,” respectfully preserved. Creation of new compositions is suggested by oral tradition, the new good ones were apparently accepted, and the inferior old ones were allowed to fall in oblivion. A great majority of gnans are the creation of anonymous authors. Apparently quite a considerable proportion of those attributed to the authorship of Great Pirs probably have nothing to do with them, and were composed at a much later date. This particularly applies to the gnans about various pirs, their miracles, their sayings.

On the subject of Ginans, what Ivanow calls the “new good ones” are in reality the “new Batini Ginans,” that were plagiarized centuries later in the names of Pirs and Sayyids, and the “inferior old ones” are the “old Shari`ati Ginans” that were composed nearly seven centuries ago by the Pirs of Khojahs. We shall shortly observe what has been added and adopted under the disguise of Batiniyat and what has been allowed to fall in oblivion or discarded under the name of Shari`at.

Note: The term Batiniyat means an esoteric doctrine which is “inward” and therefore often kept secret. It also means a doctrine that is of a dubious nature. The term Shari`at means a doctrine based upon prescribed Laws. It means the canonical Laws of Islam that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace.

Dr. G. Allana's critical notes on Ginans

The Ismailia Association for Pakistan has published in 1984 a book entitled *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs*, by Huzur Vazir Dr. Ghulamali Allana. On page 51 of Volume I, we find an interesting observation by the author, who after quoting a verse of a Ginan which is said to have been written by an Ismaili Pir named Nooruddin, writes:

The above ginan has been written in Hindi. It is interesting to point out that it is generally believed that the earliest poets [sic] in Hindi was Amir

Khusroo, born in Uttar Pradesh, India, in the year 1253 a.d. and who died in the year 1325 a.d.

According to Dr. Allana, Pir Nooruddin came to India 200 years before Khusroo. The question is, did Pir Nooruddin write these Ginans in Hindi (an Indic language) 200 years before Khusroo or did someone who wrote them later give the authorship to the Pir?

After quoting verses from Pir Sadr-din's Ginan and a famous Sindhi poet's work, Allana writes (pp. 90-91):

Pir Sadruddin was born in 1300 a.d., and Shah Abdul Latif in 1688 a.d. Both wrote poetry, among other languages, in Sindhi. It is interesting to note that in the above refrain, Pir Sadruddin has written in the last line; in Sindhi, thus: [quotes two lines in Sindhi]. Shah Abdul Latif, three hundred and ninety years after Pir Sadruddin, has put same thought, in about identical words, as follows [quotes two lines in Sindhi].

Here again the question is, did Shah Abdul Latif plagiarize the work of the Pir or did someone plagiarize Shah's poem and give the authorship to the Pir at a much later date?

The original Ginans taught the “Path of the Prophet”

When the Ginans were first reduced into writings they were written in the Khojki script. The alphabet of this ancient form of Sindhi writing is the same as that of the Gujrati language, but the script is totally different. In the religious night schools of India, when I was a student, the students were taught to read and write this secretive Khojki script. Today, hardly one percent of Ismailis can read this secretive Sindhi script of their ancestors. The ancient Ginans that were written in Khojki script have virtually disappeared. What the Ismailis have today is a puny collection of selected short Ginans that can be easily memorized and recited from the transliterated English, French, and Urdu scripts.

Upon close scrutiny of some of the so-called old Ginans, which have survived in their original forms, one discovers that these ancient Ginans firmly advocated Sunni Tariqah of Islam. In other words these Ginans were addressed mostly to Sunni Khojahs. A few verses from one such old Ginan, entitled Booj Niranjana, are quoted below. The name of the composer, mentioned at the end of the Ginan, tells us that it was composed by Pir Sadr-din:

Jo nafsaniyat ku nakhe
sab roze Ramzanke rakhe
man thi hoi shahadat bhakhe
tab lizzat Islamki chakhe

Char mazhab burhaqq kari mane
char kitabku sahi pichhane
aur Nabi sab haqq kar jan

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tab tuj hove durrast iman

Wajib farz jo sat kari jane
sab ehkam arkan pichhane
roz qiyamat sahi kari mane
sab kahuku manme thane

Pade Qur'an Kitaba booje
to tuje rah Nabi ki sooje
jo mukh Ahmed kera booje
rah Niranjan ape sooje

Jo booje marag Pir Sadar'din kera
Jo hai sada kabool reh
Sab Nabiyoke Sartaj hai
Soh dule Nabi Rasul reh.

Translation:

If [you] can control your instincts,
keep all the fasts of Ramadhan,
recite Shahadah with belief,
then can relish Islam.

When [you] truly accept the four
religions [of four Prophets],
truly acknowledge the four books
[of four Prophets], and truly
recognize all the Prophets,
then you can have upright faith.

Admit the obligatory duties as Truth,
comprehend all the [Qur'anic] Commands
and [Five] Pillars,
sincerely believe in the Day of Judgment,
keep all these things in mind;

Read the Qur'an, understand the Book,
then you will visualize the path of
Nabi [Prophet].
If [you] comprehend the mouth [teachings] of Ahmed [Muhammad],
the pathway to invisible [Allah] will manifest itself.

Understand the path of Pir Sadr-din
which is always an accepted path.
The crown of all the prophets is

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that beloved Nabi Rasul [Muhammad].

The text of the above Ginan tells us that the composer (Pir Sadr-din) was a practicing Sunni Muslim. He was preaching what he himself had been practicing. He advocates for the teachings of "Ahmed" and not of the "Imams." He solicits his converts, who were Sunni Khojahs, to "visualize the path of Prophet" and to "comprehend the teachings of the Prophet."

Post-Alamut teachings and Pir Sadr-din

The preaching and pronouncements of the above Ginan also tells us that Pir Sadr-din could not have been sent to India by an Imami Ismaili Nizari Imam of the post-Alamut period. Imam Qasim Shah and Islam Shah were both from the post-Alamut period. Here are the reasons for this contention:

During the Alamut period, at the pronouncement of their leader Hasan 'ala dhikrihis-salam, the Nizari Ismailis had abolished the Islamic Laws of Shari'a. Ismailis were officially exempted from the keeping of the fasts during the month of Ramadhan.

Even today the practice is carried on by the Agakhani Ismailis who would justify their stand by arguing that they practice Batini (inward) spiritual fasting (i.e., controlling of the human instincts), instead of Zaheri (outward) physical fasting, as per the Farmans of the late Aga Khan.

If Pir Sadr-din was an authorized Ismaili Pir sent by a post-Alamut-period Nizari Imam, he would neither have propagated "Shari'at" nor asked his converts to "keep all the fasts of Ramadhan," a practice abolished by the Nizari Imams since 1164.

"Break your fast and rejoice"

The vast majority of Ismailis who declare "We are Batini and Sunnis are shari`ati" are not aware of the origin of this concept in the history of the Ismaili Imams. They do not know how, when, and why this religious revolution was instituted ("declared"). There are several books written by university professors under the subject of "Assassins" giving detailed accounts of "The Great Declaration," also known as "The Great Resurrection." The Declaration was made in the fortress of Alamut, in the month of Ramadhan, in the year 1164, on the anniversary of the murder of Hazrat 'Ali ibn Talib.

To make it more convincing for Ismaili readers, who may be skeptical about the historical documents recorded by non-Ismaili authors, I am quoting a passage from a history book written by a senior Ismaili missionary, Abualy A. Aziz, entitled A Brief History of Ismailism, p.73:

Mowla'na Ima'm Hasan Ala'Zikrihis Salaam declared the Youm-el-Qiya'ma, the Day of Resurrection, which was held on the nineteenth of Ramaza'n, 559 a.h. (10th of August, 1164). Thousands upon thousands of

Ismailis came from all corners of the world to attend this important day of resurrection of the holy faith. The Holy Ima'm declared...

“Today I have explained to you the Law [shari'at] and its meaning. I make you free from the rigidity of the Law and resurrect you from the bondage of the letter to the freedom of the spirit of the Law. Obey me and follow my farma'n.... Break your fast and rejoice. This is the day of utmost happiness and gratitude.”

Prior to the Declaration, Hasan II was designated as heir to Da'i Muhammad bin Buzurg-Ummid. Following the declaration, Hasan II initiated a new phase in history and became a Khalifa (deputy) of the hidden Imam, a rank higher than Da'i and a Hujja (proof) with a clear authority to command. His words were to be deemed as that of the Imam. Hasan II is known in the history books as Qa'im al-qiyama (Bringer of the Resurrection).

History records that it was a Friday in the holy month of Ramadhan. Hasan descended from the minbar (pulpit), offered two rak'at of prayers and asked his followers to break their fasts in the middle of the day and join him in the afternoon banquet, which included drinking of wine. Followers broke their fasts and joined Hasan in merrymaking. The Shari'ah laws were abolished from that day, and every year the 17th (19th, according to Abualy) of Ramadhan was celebrated as 'id-i Qiyamat, the Festival of the Resurrection.

It is essential to know the foundations and roots of such enigmatic perceptions if we are to fully understand the process of the second and third proselytizing of the Khojahs of India by the Aga Khans, who claim to be the direct descendants of Hasan 'ala dhikrihis-salam.

“We are Batini — Sunnis are Shari'ati”

Professor Bruce Borthwick of Albion College, Michigan, writes in his article “The Ismailis and Islamization in Pakistan” (p. 6):

But for Ismailis the basis of religious authority is located in the Imam. He possesses divine knowledge ('ilm), he carries the light (nur) of God, and he is the “Speaking Koran” (al-Qur'an al- Natiq). Since Ismailis have a living authority, someone who repeatedly interprets to them through firmans the faith and gives advice about life's many practical everyday problems, they have no real concern for the Sharia and its application in law and everyday life. They have no real need for a special class of legal experts (fuqaha), nor for a special science of the law (fiqh), which simply do not exist in the contemporary Ismaili tradition, as expressed in a statement I heard made by an Ismaili woman: “We are batini. Sunnis are shari'ati.”

Pauline Justification

Readers who are familiar with the history of the Apostle Paul and his preaching, especially the one identified by Christian theologians as “Pauline Justification,” would

find a similarity with the declaration of “The Great Resurrection” by Hasan II. Paul had liberated Christians from the observance of the Commandments of Moses — the Law — by saying that “faith in the Resurrected Jesus Christ” supersedes the Law. The worship of the resurrected Jesus became the worship of God. The love of Jesus — the resurrected Son of God — meant the love of God the Father.

Hasan II, while liberating Nizari Ismailis from the “rigidity of the Law” said: “Obey me and follow my farma'n.” In other words, disregard the revealed laws of Allah and obey my laws. Today, the majority of the Agakhani Ismailis are doing exactly that because they believe it to be the essence of their faith. Missionary Abualy A. Aziz writes in the Preface of his book: “Isma'ilis have always kept their love for their Ima'me' Zama'n above everything.”

Aga Khan resurrects “The Great Resurrection”

On 20 February 1910, at Rajkot, India, Aga Khan III made the following “Secret Declaration” before his followers. The text is published in a book called Khangi Farman meaning “Secret Pronouncements.” The Farman is written in Khojki, a secretive script. Here is a translation of that Declaration:

Do not at all reflect about the future and do not at all think about whether you shall receive the Heaven or the Hell in the afterlife. Because, all things — the Heaven and the Hell — [to give] is in my hand.

Ismailis are repeatedly reminded that more they serve their Imam with body, mind and money, the closer they become to that authority who has Heaven and Hell in his control.

“Total and unquestioning obedience”

Professor Bernard Lewis of the Annenberg Institute in Philadelphia is a long-term member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University. One of his well-known subjects of research has been the history of the Assassins of Alamut, and their mystical doctrines. On page 27 of *The Assassins — A Radical Sect in Islam* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1967; reprint, Al Saqi, London, 1985), Bernard Lewis has very briefly but in scholarly terms explained the base of a belief that requires total and unquestioning obedience from the followers.

The Imam is central to the Ismaili system — of doctrine and of organization, of loyalty and of action. After the creation of the world by the action of the universal mind on the universal soul, human history falls into a series of cycles,The imams, in the current cycle the descendants of `Ali and Fatima through Isma'il, were divinely inspired and infallible — in a sense indeed themselves divine, since the Imam was the microcosm, the personification of the metaphysical soul of the universe. As such, he was the fountainhead of knowledge and authority — of the esoteric truths

that were hidden from the uninformed, and of commands that required total and unquestioning obedience.

The one, the only, and the whole basic principle — Holy Firman

An interesting article on the Ismailis by Professor Peter B. Clarke, a lecturer in History and Social Science at the University of Ibadan, appeared in the December 1976 issue of the British Journal of Sociology, Volume 27, no. 4. Dr. Clarke writes (p. 486):

The Qur'an is of importance to Ismailis, but not so important to them as it is to Sunnis. Ismailis have the word of God Incarnate in the Imam: 'It is the word of holy firman of Imam-i-Zaman, which is the one, the only and the whole basic principle of Ismailism.' The authoritative statements of the Imam's — the firmans — are binding on Ismailis and take effect immediately.

If the holy Farmans of the Imams are like the word of God Incarnate (the Qur'an) for the Agakhani Ismailis, the Ginans of Pirs are like the word of authorized messengers of God Incarnate (the Hadith). Hence, plagiarizing of the Ginans is a serious matter from the point of view of an Ismaili belief.

The new Ginanic preaching

When Pir Sadr-din converted Hindus as Sunni Khojahs, he gave them Sat-panth, meaning "A path of truth." The entire foundation of that path (faith) was based upon the Qur'anic Commands and the teachings of the Prophet, as seen from the verses of his Ginan Booj Niranjana, quoted heretofore.

The so-called "new good Ginans," written centuries later, made Khojahs deviate from the "Path of Truth." These plagiarized Ginans indoctrinated the descendants of the Sunni Khojahs into practicing Gnosticism (a Dualistic form of Shi'ism). The aim of it was to identify Hazrat `Ali as the Creator of the Universe, as clearly evident from the verses below of a Ginan entitled Moman Chetamani (warnings for believer). The authorship of this Ginan has been attributed to a Sayyid. The quoted dialogue is between the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace), and a leader of the angels who has descended to this earth to pay homage to Hazrat `Ali, who has just been born:

Aji tare Nabi Muhammad em boliya
Bhai Mala'ik, tamne kahoo vichar,
Amne pote olkhaviyo,
eh chhe srusthino sarjanhar.

Translation:

And then Nabi Muhammad said,
Brother Angel, let me tell you my thought,

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[`Ali] himself has made known to me,
He [`Ali] is the Creator of this universe.

Any one who has read the history of the Prophet's life would substantiate that he heard the voice of angel Gabriel for the first time, when he received the very first Revelation of the Qur'an. The Prophet was in a kind of shock to hear the voice of Gabriel because he had not heard any such voice, prior to that date. This happened at the age of forty, that is eleven years after the birth of Hazrat `Ali.

This shows that the claim made by the author of the Ginan that "Nabi Muhammad" had a dialogue with "Brother Angel" eleven years prior to that date, the day when 'Ali was born, is totally out of question. The purpose of this manufactured Ginan, under the name of a Sayyid (a descendant of the Prophet), was to establish that the Prophet of Islam had himself acknowledged the Divinity of 'Ali.

Even with such glaring contradictions, the enigmatic perceptions have survived. Ismailis proudly recite the above verses in the Jama`at khanas and the missionaries proudly propagate the theme of this Ginan. Since Moman Chetamani is officially published, printed, and circulated by the Ismailia Association, no Ismaili would dare to challenge the authenticity of the recited verse or verses in writing, unless he is prepared to face the consequences under Article Fourteen of the Ismaili Constitution.

In my previous publication Understanding Ismailism (to read the book, go to: <http://www.mostmerciful.com/underis.htm>) published in 1988, I had quoted the above verse and pointed out the incongruity, but the Ginan has survived and so has the belief associated with it. Plagiarized or not, such compositions when propagated in the name of a descendant of the Prophet (Sayyid), to establish the Divinity of a person (`Ali), who had never in his lifetime claimed himself to be any other than a humble servant of Allah, reflects adversely on the concepts and ideology of Shi`ism in general.

And buoyed them up with false hopes

Those who turn back as apostates after Guidance was clearly shown to them, — The Evil one has instigated them and buoyed them up with false hopes. This, because they said to those who hate what Allah has revealed, "We will obey you in part of (this) matter"; but Allah knows their (inner) secrets.

Holy Qur'an 47/25-26

Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali:

Such men are entirely in the hands of Evil. They follow its suggestions, and their hopes are built on its deceptions. They have become so impervious to facts and truths, because, without the courage to oppose God's Cause openly, they secretly intrigue with God's enemies, and say that they will follow them part of the way, and by remaining partly in the other camp, they will be far more useful as spies and half-hearted doubters than by

going over altogether. If they think that this game will be successful, they are mistaken. All the inner secrets and motives of their hearts are known to God.

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AGA KHAN ARRIVES IN INDIA

1840 A.D. — A political refugee from Persia

Professor Peter B. Clarke writes in the December 1976 issue of the British Journal of Sociology that in 1840, the first Aga Khan (Shah Hasan `Ali Shah) fled from Persia after an unsuccessful rebellion against the throne. The political refugee came to Afghanistan, accompanied by a few hundred of his horsemen, seeking the sanctuary of the British Raj. Before leaving Persia, the Aga Khan had sent his family to Iraq, fearing persecution from Emperor Muhammad Shah and his army. For the majority of Persians that were conforming to the Twelver Shi'ah persuasion of Islam, Iraq was a center of refuge.

Having lost all his lands in Persia, the “adventurous and romantic” Aga Khan was obliged to help the government of British India in their conquest of Afghanistan and, thereafter of Sind, who in turn could help him recover his lost territories from the Shah of Persia.

“Aga Khan” is not a title

Many Ismailis regard “Aga Khan” to be a title conferred upon Aga Hasan Ali Shah (Aga Khan I) by the late Shah of Persia. According to Aga Khan III's own admission before Justice Russell at the Haji Bibi Case (Bombay Law Reporter, 1908, Volume 11, p. 432) “[Aga Khan] is not a title but a sort of 'alias,' a pet name when Hassan Ali [Aga Khan I] was a young man....”

Biographer Willi Frischauer records in The Aga Khans that Shah Hasan 'Ali Shah was known in Persia by the pet name of Aga Khan (great chief), which he adopted as his hereditary title. Dr. Daftary writes (p. 23) that “Aqa Khan” is the proper term for “Agha Khan.”

1851 A.D. — Attempt to acquire community properties

Documents recorded with the High Courts of Bombay indicate that Aga Khan I, who was a kind of political prisoner of the British Government in Calcutta at the insistence of the Persian ruler Muhammad `Ali Shah, came to Mazagon (Bombay) in 1849. As soon as the Aga Khan moved his headquarters to Bombay, he aspired to take over the properties belonging to the Khojah community of Bombay. These properties were built long before the arrival of the Aga Khan, by the Khojah community with their own resources, as declared before the judiciary.

The Khojahs had from time to time subscribed money for the Jamat's realpatidar.com purposes and out of such subscriptions, legacies and gifts, the Jamat had

become possessed of a Durgah, and burial ground and Masjid, and also a Jamatkhana and some other property.

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In 1851, a Declaration of Rights was pronounced by Justice Sir Erskine Perry, which read: "...the property belonged exclusively to the Jamat, and that the Jamat and not the Aga Khan, could dispose it off as it liked." Sir Erskine Perry also pronounced that: "Every Khojah be he a Soonee, or a Sheeah, had a right to go to the Jamatkhana for worship, and to use the utensils and other properties therein."

The above pronouncement tells us that Sunni Khojahs used to go to Khojah Jama`at khanas for worshipping. Obviously, Sunni Khojahs must be reciting Namaz of the Sunni Tariqah, in the Jama`at khanas, as a part of their worship. No Sunni Muslim would recite Du'a of the Ismaili Tariqah in which 'Ali is witnessed "Sahi Allah or Aliyyullah."

Today, the Khojah Jama'at khanas, the Khojah burial grounds, and the patriarchal Durgahs of the Khojahs have become the private property of Karim Aga Khan. Only the followers of the Aga Khan are allowed to enter these Jama`at khanas. The followers can only recite Ismaili Du'a and not the Islamic Salah (Namaz) in these Jama'at khanas.

1861 A.D. — Aga Khan admits "Khojahs are Sunnis"

In the cause célèbre tried in the High Court of Bombay before Sir Joseph Arnould in April and June 1866, and popularly known as "The Khojah Case" or "Aga Khan Case," a judgment document was issued on 12 November 1866 and recorded in the Bombay High Court Reporter (Volume 12, 1866, pp. 323-63). Going through that document we come across a crucial remark made by Justice Arnould about an Exhibit, numbered 19, that was filed by the Aga Khan's own Counsel during the trial. Exhibit No. 19 tells us that until 1861 the converted Khojahs were Sunni Muslims, according to Aga Khan's own admission.

An extract from the judgment document reads:

...on the 20th October, 1861, Aga Khan thought fit to publish the paper, a translation of which is printed in Schedule B to his answer, and is also filed as Exhibit No. 19.

In this paper Aga Khan expresses his desire to bring the Khojahs to conform to the practices "of the Imamujah creed of his holy ancestors,"He states that having seen it in print that the Khojahs are Sunis [sic], and that a certain person (meaning himself) is "peremptorily inviting them to embrace the Imamujah creed," he has prepared this paper....The paper ends thus. "Now he who may be willing to obey my orders shall write his name in this book...that I may know him."

After a few generations of allowing people to read and hear that their ancestors were converted as Imami Nizari Ismailis by the Pirs that came to India from Persia, it is very

difficult to convince otherwise. However, the above recorded fact shows that twenty years after the arrival of the Aga Khan in India, the converts of Pir Sadr-din were yet Sunni Muslims.

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The facts presented hereafter show that Aga Khan I and his family members were practicing the Ithna'ashri faith and that the concept of "Hazar Imam" was either missing or had not yet been developed.

"Taziyadari" — "an obligatory duty" writes Aga Khan I

The year in which Aga Khan invited Khojahs to join the faith of his ancestors, he published his autobiography in Persian. The book was entitled Ibrat-afza and was lithographed in Bombay in 1861. The narrative is in the first person and the work is written in simple prose, according to Professor W. Ivanow. In his autobiography, Aga Khan I, described his journey from Persia and the difficulties he had to face before reaching Bombay.

Four years later, the autobiography was translated into Gujrati and published for Bawa Karim Dadji by Oriental Press, Bombay. Ibrat-afza is one of those rare books of which Ismailis of this age have no knowledge. In fact most of the Ismailis do not even know that Aga Khan I wrote his autobiography. Below is an English translation of an extract from the Gujrati translation. The selected portion is from the last page of Aga Khan's description of his journey from Gujrat to Bombay:

...thereafter I traveled to Anjar and after accomplishing the Jama'ati work of the surrounding districts I traveled to Halar and Kathiawar. And, in the month of Muharram 1261 A.H. [1845 A.D.], I fulfilled the rituals of "Taziyadari" for Abba Abdullah of Jamnagar ...thereafter traveled to Damman via the port of Surat. And, in the month of Muharram in 1262 a.h. [1846 a.d.], I fulfilled the "Lawajama" [the obligatory duties] of "Taziyadari" in Damman. From there, in the end part of the month of Safar of the said year, I arrived in Bombay.

The word "Taziyah" means "solace" or "condolence." It is also a name, in the Shi'ah Ithna'ashriyya sect, for a "passion play" wherein a preacher verbally recreates the details of 1400-year-old historical events and arouses frenzied compassion for the martyrs. The act of fulfilling this religious duty is called "Taziyadari."

Aga Khan I has confirmed that in 1261 and 1262 A.H. (1845 and 1846 A.D.), he had "fulfilled the obligatory duties of Taziyadari." This statement would certainly make an Agakhani Ismaili look back into the history of his Imams and ponder; if his forty-sixth Imam, Aga Khan I, was a living Imam or if he was advocating the concept of an ever-living "Hazar" Imam, then how could he have mourned for a dead Imam or participated in the ritual of "passion play" (Taziyadari). And, that too with a conviction that the rituals performed by him were the components of his obligatory duties. To commemorate a dead

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Imam was to admit that the Imamate, which in essence is spiritual and not physical, had not been passed on to the next Imam and it died with the dead Imam.

“Passion Play” or Taziyadari is a hallmark of the Ithna'ashri faith. Shi'ah Imami Ismailis do not mourn the death of any of their past Imams. The month of Muharram comes and goes unnoticed by them.

Ismailis often defend the fact that the ancestors of Karim Aga Khan were Nizari Imami Ismailis but were practicing the Ithna'a shriyya faith, perhaps for the sake of Taqiyyah (dissimulation in order to protect oneself), because of religious persecutions in Persia. However, the rituals mentioned in the autobiography were performed in India during the British India rule under which everyone enjoyed the freedom of religious practices.

Khalu Jama'at

Eventually, Aga Khan I settled in a palace in Bombay together with his entourage. The palace was called “Aga Hall.” In his Memoirs, Aga Khan calls it “a place of pilgrimage” for his followers. In the servant quarters of the palace were settled the distant relatives of the Aga Khan and the descendants of the horsemen that accompanied Aga Khan when he arrived in India. These Persian-speaking relatives and ex-comrades of Aga Khan were known as “Khalu” and the community as a whole was known as Khalu Jama'at. Many of these Khalus used to work for the Aga Khan and look after his racehorses. Almost all of them received a pension or free quarter on Aga Khan's land in Bombay or Poona. In the course of time, many of these Persian-speaking Khalus “married Indian wives, many of them of Ismaili families,” writes Aga Khan in his Memoirs. In other words, Khalu families were not considered as “Ismaili families” by the late Aga Khan. As we shall observe in the following pages, Khalus were Ithna'ashries.

Khalu families and the black dresses

During the Second World War, the British military had taken over the Aga Hall and converted into a school in which I was studying. The English-speaking young Khalus, who were residing in the compound of the Aga Hall became friendly with the Ismaili students. They were often surprised at the strange beliefs of Khojah Ismailis for one of their fellow countryman.

During the month of Muharram and the following ten days, almost all members of this Khalu Jama'at, with the exception of a few families that had intermarried with Ismailis, would wear black dresses. They would strictly observe the solemnity of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in Kerbala. During these days of mourning, they would have no social entertainments or festivities. The closest relatives of the Aga Khan, with the exception of a couple of families, used to frequent the Mogul Imambaras of the Shi'ah Ithna'ashries in Bombay and Poona wearing black dresses.

In those days no believing Ismaili would wear a black garment at any time of the year. Black was regarded as a symbol of the dissident Khojahs. Visiting Jama'at khanas or attending social functions wearing a black dress was a kind of taboo.

Invocation of Fourteen Ma'sums

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The fact that the ancestors of Aga Khan I were practicing Ithna'ashri faith is further attested by Dr. John Hollister in the following text. He writes in 'The Shi'a Of India' (p. 335), quoting an extract from one of the Ivanow's rare book, 'Tombs of Some Persian Ismaili Imams'(pp.53-54):

Within the mausoleum there are five graves besides the central one, and others are outside. Within, tombstones “are fixed in the walls in a standing position” which helps to preserve them. The central grave is covered with a sanduq (box) of carved wood. The carvings contain the usual sura Ya' Sin, an invocation of blessings upon the fourteen ma'sums, and rhythmically repeating ornament with square svastion- like combination of four words, 'Ali. In one place it is clearly written: `this is the box (sanduq) of Shah Mustansir bi'llah, the son of Shah 'Abdu's salam.' Written on the 10th of Muharrum 904.

Notes:

1. Ismaili historians have recorded that their thirty-fourth Imam was named Gharib Mirza but was known as Shah Mustansir bi'llah III. He was a son of Imam 'Abdu's salam. He died in 902 a.h. (1498 a.d.).
2. The term “fourteen ma'sums” refers to Bibi Khadija (the wife of the Prophet), Bibi Fatima (the wife of Imam 'Ali), and the twelve Imams of the Ithna'ashries.
3. Any one that invokes blessings upon “twelve Imams” has accepted the Imamate of Imam Musa Kazim and his descendants. Consequently, he has rejected the Imamate of Imam Ismail (the brother of Musa Kazim) and of his descendants as well.

One has but to admit that such a person cannot be qualified as an “Ismaili” or as an “Imam of the Imami Nizari Ismailis.” In other words, Shah Mustansir bi'llah and his family members were “Twelvers” Shi'ahs and not Nizari Imami Ismailis.

1905 A.D. — Aga Khan III's frank admission

In 1905, a suit was brought against Aga Khan III and some of his relatives by a widow named Haji Bibi. The widow was a daughter of Jungi Shah, an uncle of Aga Khan III. The petition was filed in the High Court of Bombay under Civil Suit No. 729. All extracts connected with the Haji Bibi Case quoted hereafter are reproduced from the Bombay Law Reporter (O.C.J. 1908, Volume 11. Justice Russell records in his judgment (p. 425):

There can be no doubt that the mother of defendant 1 [Aga Khan III] and some of his relatives are Asnasharis. He himself frankly admitted that he had been present on an occasion when the Ziarat to the 3rd, 8th and the 12th Imams [of the Asnasharis] was said but he did not repeat it....

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Note: The participants at a Ziarat ceremony listen to the recitation. They do not have to repeat it.

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1905 A.D. — Questions and answers in Kilwa, Tanganyika

In 1905, a German officer arranged a meeting between Aga Khan III and a group of Khojahs in the port of Kilwa, Tanganyika, East Africa. At that time the territory was under the German rule. The group members were Khojah Shariff Noormohammed, Suleman Walji, and Haji Suleman Bhimji. An Ismaili named Hasambhai acted as an interpreter on behalf of the Aga Khan. The purpose of the meeting was to resolve some of the issues that the members of the Khojah community had raised during the Aga Khan's visit to Tanganyika. The questions asked by the group and the answers given by the Aga Khan at this meeting were published in a booklet. Below is the translation of one particular question and its answer, which appear on pp. 20-21:

Shariff Noormohamed questions:

Four years ago from now, in Savant 1952 (i.e., 1901 A.D.), during the month of Ramadhan, I was in Bombay. On the nights of 19th, 21st, and 23rd Ramadhan there were gatherings in the main Jamatkhana. At these gatherings you had placed Qur'an upon your head, asked the others to do so and did the Amal of Sabe-Qad'r. During these ritual the names of each of the Ithna'ashri Imams were taken ten times and thereafter Magfarat (forgiveness) was sought from Allah in the name of "Fourteen Ma'sums." At that time you did not remember the Ismaili Imams. Please explain your reasons for this.

The Aga Khan answers:

Imam Jaffar Sadiq had two sons. One was Musa and the other was Ismail. Now please tell me, what is the relationship between the sons of Musa and Ismail?

Shariff Noormohamed replies:

Cousin brothers.

The Aga Khan rejoins:

They are our cousin brothers. Evidently, we should remember them. Why should we not remember them? Because of you!

Such an evasive response and remark by a person claiming to be a Mazhar (literally, copy, manifestation) of Allah and a Spiritual Father and Mother of his followers cannot but reflect adversely. It nevertheless clearly shows that Aga Khan III himself led and his followers participated routinely, in Ithna'ashriyya ceremonies and indeed Ithna'ashrism was practiced by him and his community well into the first few decades of the 20th century.

"Jangname" were read in every Jama'at khana

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Jangname (literally, narratives of war; in Shi'ah terminology events describing the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in Kerbala) that the Aga Khans had brought with them from Persia were translated into the Sindhi language. These Jangname were recited in every Jama'at khana of India and East Africa starting from 10th of Dhu'l-hijja until the Chelum (the fortieth day of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn).

Hollister writes (pp. 409-10):

The first Agha Khan used to attend the jama'at khana for the recitation of the day- to-day events of Muharram, and so did the second Agha Khan. By way of concession majalis for the recital of the story of Husain are still continued in the jama'at khana, but the present Agha Khan never attends,...

Aga Khan III allowed the recitations of Qissahs and Bayyans in the Jama'at khana. This fact also is evident from his early Farmans, in which he tells his followers not to place their trust in everything that is narrated in these Qissahs and Bayyans.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Bapu Missionary, father-in-law of missionary Abualy Aziz, used to sit on a wooden Takhat (raised platform) and do the recitation in the chief Jama'at khana of Bombay.

Aga Khan — a murid of Mast 'Ali Shah

Referring to a text from Ibrat-afza, the autobiography in Persian written by Hasan 'Ali Shah, Agha Khan Mahallati (ed. Husayn Kuhi Kirmani, Tehran, 1325/1946, p. 13), Farhad Daftary writes in 'The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines' (Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1990, p. 507):

At the time of Muhammad Shah's [Emperor of Persia's] coronation, Mast 'Ali Shah, who had been enjoying the Agha Khan's hospitality for some time at Mahallat, accompanied his Nizari friend [Agha Khan] to Tehran. As a reflection of their close friendship, Mast 'Ali Shah indeed once boasted to Muhammad Shah that 'I have a murid like the Agha Khan who himself has thousands of murids in most countries (bilad) of the world'.

Mast 'Ali Shah (Hajji Zayn al-'Abidin Shirwani) was a successor to Majdhub 'Ali Shah, the thirty-eighth Qutb of the ibn 'Ata Allah Sufi Order. Agha Khan I had initiated himself in this Sufi order. In the literary sense the word majdhub means "holy fool," a person who is seemingly mad but possesses an aura of sanctity. Ismaili historians have recorded that the ancestors of Agha Khan were affiliated with the Nimat Allahi Sufi order. Their fortieth Imam Nizar was "commonly known as Ataullah in the Sufic circle" and Imam's followers "were known as Ata'ilahis or Ata'is." Non-Ismaili scholars Pourjavady, Nasrollah and Peter Lamborn Wilson have written articles in *Studia Islamica* (Volume 41, 1975) on "Isma'ilis and Ni'matullahis."

In the Ismaili concept, "Hazar Imam" is the Supreme Authority and also a Mazhar (literally, copy, manifestation) of Allah. It is indeed surprising that an individual who had

a god like status among his followers and was acknowledged as the fountainhead of all knowledge and all authority, was himself a follower and had a Master!

Aga Khan no different from any other Syed

In the famous Haji Bibi Case of 1905, Justice Russell has recorded the evidence of witness Gulam Hussein Alu Muraj (Bombay Law Reporter, p. 454) as under:

There is no difference between the present Aga Khan and any other Syed. There are many thousands of Syeds in the world....I consider them equal, they are descendants from Fatima. There was no difference between Ali Shah and the descendants of Syeds in the world. I give the same answer as to Hasan Ali....I believe they were Syeds because they said so....This has been so ever since I can remember.

Aga Khan was called “Pir Salamut” by Khojahs

Nawroji M. Dumasia, an assistant editor of the 'Times of India', Bombay, is one of the few authors who have published books on the early history of the Aga Khans. In his Memoirs, Aga Khan addresses Dumasia as “a talented Parsee and a friend.”

Dr. John Norman Hollister quotes an important passage from Mr. Dumasia's book 'A Brief History of the Aga Khan' pp.85-85 in his book The Shi'a of India (p. 366):

In Bombay the Agha Khan occasionally presided at the Jamat Khana or Council Hall of the Khojas (which, together with other landed properties was purchased out of the offerings made to the Agha Khan whom they called the 'Pir Salamut') on the more sacred anniversaries of the Mahomedan calendar. On the occasion of the Mohurru he attended with some state to hear the solemn recitation by Shiah Moolas of the legend of the great Martyrdom. On stated days he led the 'nimaz' or prayer in the Jamat Khana and presided over the distribution of water mixed with the holy dust of Kerbella.

Notes:

1. The quoted text tells us that the Aga Khan, after having got the control of the Khojah Jama`at Khana and the Council Hall in Bombay, was yet called “Pir Salamut” and not “Imam Salamut” by his followers.

2. That the Aga Khan had not corrected his followers during all these years shows that the Khojahs had accepted Aga Khan as a Sufi Pir (Master), which he was. In those days, there were many Ithna'ashri Sufi Masters in Persia who had their followers. Since the Aga Khan was an eminent follower of a Persian Sufi Master Mast `Ali Shah, he could have been very well accepted as a Sufi Pir (Master) by the Khojahs and hence was called “Pir Salamut.”

3. The quoted text records, “on the occasion of the Mohurram” Aga Khan and his followers were attending “the solemn recitation of the legend of the great Martyrdom” in the Jama`at khanas of Bombay. This unequivocally proves that Aga Khan I and his followers were practicing the Ithna'ashri faith. The practice of Rozakhani (reciting legends of the sufferings of Imam Husayn and his family members at Kerbala) and Ziarat of the great Martyrdom even continued during the early years of my parents.

4. The quoted passage also tells us that the converted Khojahs were reciting “Nimaz” and Aga Khan I used to lead the “Nimaz.” My father- in-law tells me that his grandfather used to recite “Nimaz” (Namaz) in those days.

The obvious question is, who abolished this practice of reciting Islamic Namaz from the Khojah Jama'at khanas and introduced the practice of reciting Du'a facing the photographs of Aga Khan? And, before the arrival of the Aga Khans, whose photographs were hung from the walls of the “Ismaili” Jama'at khanas, if there were any? Prior to the arrival of the Aga Khans, the Jama'at khanas were known as Khojah Jama'at khanas. Shi'ahs and Sunnis, both used to attend these places of worship, as declared by Sir Erskine Perry in his judgment.

Bring forward an authority

“These our people have taken for worship gods other than Him: Why do they not bring forward an authority clear (and convincing) for what they do? Who doth more wrong than such as invent a falsehood against Allah?” Holy Qur'an 18/15

5

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THE SECOND PHASE OF PROSELYTIZATION

Aga Khan's "Circular" disputed for twenty years

As we have seen during the first phase of proselytization, the Hindus were converted to Khojah Sunni Muslim, by Pir Sadr-din and his descendants. The second phase started with Aga Khan I arriving in India.

When he first came to India, he and the horsemen that accompanied him were practicing the Shi'ah Ithna'ashriyya rites and rituals that their ancestors had observed in Persia. After having seen that the converted Khojahs were Sunnis, as acknowledged in his letter of invitation dated 20 October 1861, quoted previously, he extended an invitation to these Khojah Sunni Muslims to join the creed of his ancestors, that is to become Khojah Shi'a Ithna'ashries. It is very important to note that the invitation extended in 1861 by the Aga Khan I, was not to join the Nizari Imami Ismaili faith but to join the "Imamujah creed of his holy ancestors."

The converts of Pir Sadr-Din, the ancestors of the Agakhani Ismailis, did not immediately accept him as their religious leader. "The first Agha Khan established his religious authority in India after some difficulties," records Dr. Daftary (p. 514).

In 1845, prior to the date of this invitation, Aga Khan I had issued a "Circular" addressed to the Khojahs of India, asking them to change their religious ceremonies to Shi'ah Tariqah and ritual, to be performed by Shi'ah Maulvis and Sayyids instead of Sunni Mullahs.

Alimohammad J. Chunara writes in Noorum- Mubin (p. 661) that some influential wealthy Jama'ati members opposed the order and said:

"Khojahs are originally Sunni, therefore the ceremonies of their marriages and griefs should be performed at the hands of Sunni Mullahs under the rituals of Ahle Sunnat."

In Kutchh, the Khojahs of Kera opposed the Circular. At the command of Aga Khan I, his son Aga 'Ali Shah came to Kutchh in 1858 to settle the dispute. But, Noorum-Mubin records, the party belonging to the residents of Kera was very strong and did not come to terms. In Kathiawar, the Khojahs of Mahuwa opposed the Circular. They too refused to obey the order. Finally, in 1874 (i.e., eight years after the judgment of the "Khojah Case") a settlement was reached, records Noorum-Mubin.

"Reciting Namaz with hands folded makes it null"

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Editor Jaffarali of a Gujrati monthly, Alamdar, writes in Noor-e-Haqq (Bombay, 1964, p. 27):

A warning was issued by Aga Khan the third in a small booklet published in Gujrati in Bombay in Hijri 1312 [1895 a.d.], 'Khojah kom na mazhab na ketlak mul-tatwoh tatha kirya sabandhi nu nanu pustak' on the subject of the fundamental basic religious rites and ceremonies of the Khojah community. Aga Khan pronounced that reciting Namaz (Salah) with both hands folded and/or saying of "Ameen" after "Sura al-Hamd" during the Namaz, makes it null and void, except in the case of observing a Taqiyyah (dissimulation).

The Shi'ah Muslims keep their hands on their sides while reciting their Namaz and the Sunni Muslims (except for those following the Maliki school of thought) recite with both their hands folded. This document confirms that when this booklet was published by the Aga Khan, the converted Khojahs were Sunni Muslims and had been reciting the Namaz in accordance with the Sunni Tariqah of Islam which necessitated issuance of such a warning.

Aga Khan's greatest hour

Below is an extract from the article "My Finest Hour" written by Aga Khan III for the British media and reproduced by his biographer Harry J. Greenwall in The Aga Khan (p. 46):

My greatest hour — I have no doubt of it — occurs regularly every week. It is on a Friday, and invariably sometime after noon. Every Friday I, like every other Moslem in the world, spend an hour in meditation and prayer. That hour is my greatest hour. The little instrument which lies before me as I write — a watch and compass combined, which I carry with me wherever I go — tells me the time has come, and it also tells me in what direction I am to turn.

Always I must turn towards Mecca,...I am a very busy man, and it is on very few occasions indeed that I find myself in the Moslem mosques at Woking or in Paris. If I cannot go there, I simply kneel down wherever I happen to be....

Notes:

1. The Mosque at Woking being a Sunni Mosque, the Imam of the Mosque leads the prayers with folded hands. In accordance with the above warning the Namaz of that Imam and his followers would be null and void, yet Aga Khan preferred to go to Woking.

2. If Friday Noon Prayer was the greatest hour for the Aga Khan, then he should have directed his followers to pray at that time also. Unfortunately, the Ismaili Jama'at khanas all over the world are closed at noontime because there is no such thing as Noon Prayers in the Ismaili doctrine.

3. Aga Khan kept a small compass and recited his prayers facing Mecca. His followers recite prayers facing any direction they choose, preferably in front of a photograph of Aga Khan.

1864 A.D. — Sunni Mullah replaced with Shi'ah Mullah

The documents filed in the famous “Khojah Case of 1866” reveal that two years before the case, in February 1864, Aga Khan I, removed the officiating Sunni Mullah from the old Khojah Mosque in Bombay and replaced him with a Shi'ah Mullah to perform the ceremonies according to Shi'ah forms.

Notes:

1. If the converted Khojahs were Shi'ahs then they would not have hired a Sunni Mullah to officiate their religious ceremonies, especially in the city of Bombay where there has never been a shortage of Shi'ah Mullahs.

2. A Sunni Mullah will not recite and invoke blessings upon the names of “Twelve Imams” or “Hazar Imam,” hence the religious ceremonies of the Shi'ahs cannot be performed by a Sunni Mullah which often necessitates sending blessings upon these names.

3. Aga Khan had established his headquarters in Bombay since 1849. If the Mosque and the Durgah in Bombay belonged to his followers, he could have removed the Sunni Mullah forthwith and not after fifteen years.

1866 A.D. — A turning point in history

In 1866, a complaint was filed against Aga Khan and others in the High Court of Bombay. It is popularly known as the “Khojah Case.” In the judgment document, it is recorded:

...the relators and plaintiffs contend that Pir Sadr-ud-din, (whom both sides admit to have originally converted the Khojahs from Hinduism to some form of Mahomedanism) was a Suni; that the Khojah community has ever since its first conversion been and now is, Suni; and that no persons calling themselves Khojahs who are not Sunis, are entitled to be considered members of the Khojah community, or to have any share or interest in the public property of the Khojah community or any voice in the management thereof.

The plaintiffs lost the court battle. Historians write that a landmark court decision pronounced by Justice Sir Joseph Arnould in favor of the Aga Khan was a turning point in the history of the Khojah community, and the years of exile for the political refugee from Iran were over. At the time of the judgment all the properties of the Khojah Jama'at,

including the Jama'at khanas, burial grounds, etc., stood in the name of the Jama'at, and after that date the properties were transferred into the name of Aga Khan. The judgment sealed the fate of the Khojah community. Aga Khan got a Raj (regime) of his own to dictate and steer the Khojah Muslims the way he and his descendants would decide.

1866 A.D. — Majority defeated, minority wins

Justice Arnould recorded in his judgment document that there were between 13,000 to 15,000 houses or families of Khojah Muslims in the 1860s. Continuing a little further, he wrote that Aga Khan's Counsel had submitted, along with the previously mentioned Exhibit No. 19, a book of signature. The document also tells us that the said Exhibit ended thus: "Now he who may be willing to obey my [Aga Khan's] orders shall write his name in this book that I may know him." The judgment document records that the book "was signed by some 1,700 males." This clearly shows that only an insignificant minority, 1700 males out of 13,000 or 15,000 families of Khojahs, had shown their willingness to obey his orders.

Raj's policy: "Divide and Rule"

A question is often asked: Why did Justice Arnould, knowing the above facts, pass a judgment that would give Aga Khan the authority to command a community eighty-two percent of whose families or heads of families were not willing to obey his orders? Here are the plausible answers:

1. During the period of Imperial Colonial Rule, it was a well-known policy of the British Raj to "Divide and Rule." With this court decree (issued by a British judge) the Colonial administration was able to separate a group of 15,000 Indian Muslims from their formidable international brotherhood, the Ummah.
2. By placing this newly separated community under the leadership of a staunch ally of the British, the Raj created a new religious party that would be friendly and cooperative with the administration.
3. The following submission, made by Aga Khan's Counsel before Justice Arnould and quoted in the judgment document appears to be a sort of indirect, circuitous reminder to one of the representatives of the British Government of India that a return favor was due.

...during the latter stages of the Afghan war (in 1841 and 1842) [Aga Khan and his cavalry members] were of some service to General Nott in Candahar and also to General England in his advance from Scinde to join Nott. For these services and for others which he was enabled to render to Sir Charles Napier in his conquest of Scinde in 1843-44 Aga Khan received, and it seems still enjoys, a pension from the British Government of India.

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The Aga Khan was seeking a territorial “Raj” in return for the services that he and his cavalry had offered to Her Majesty the Queen of England. One can say that the favor was returned and Aga Khan got a “Raj” to rule a community instead of a territory. Aga Khan III records in his Memoirs that the court decision accorded his grandfather “princely status by the British Raj and its representatives in India.”

Diamond Rattansi — an Ismaili scholar

Diamond Rattansi is an Ismaili scholar from North America. Extracts from his works Islamization and the Khojah Isma'ili Community in Pakistan (Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Canada, 1987) and “The Nizari Ismailis of Pakistan: Ismailism, Islam and Westernism viewed through the Firmans: 1936-1980” are often quoted by university professors in their articles. On the subject of Justice Arnould's verdict Rattansi writes (p. 29):

The British not only confirmed the Agha Khan's absolute and divine authority but had earlier recognized Isma'ili loyalty to the British by granting the Agha Khan the title of “His Highness,” and a life pension of Rs. 3,000 per annum. In this gesture the British probably sought an advantage by rallying support against those Muslims who resented the British rule.

A pagan emperor seals the fate of Christians

Nearly three centuries before the birth of Prophet Muhammad, the Christian community was on the brink of dividing into two. A Christian scholar, Arius, advocated Arianism, which professed that the Father alone was really God and that Jesus was different from his Father and did not share in the being of “God the Father.”

Bishop Alexander and his Church advocated Trinitarian beliefs. They excommunicated Arius and declared Arianism a Christian heresy. The theological rift became serious and divided the Christian community. The monotheism promoted by Arius gained widespread support and the Church began to lose ground.

It is interesting to know who played a prominent part in deciding for the Christians their future: a pagan Emperor named Constantine (d. 337), who had nothing to do with Jesus Christ or Christianity. The Trinity document was drafted under his auspices in his Imperial palace by a Council. An Imperial Decree made that document a law of the land.

The fate of one and a half billion Christians today, was sealed by a pagan Decree that was promulgated sixteen centuries ago by a pagan Emperor.

A Christian judge seals the fate of Khojahs

A similar situation arose in the middle of the nineteenth century within the Khojah community of India. Aga Khan advocated Shi'ahism, which would give him the needed

authority to rule the community. The group that filed a suit with the British Courts advocated Sunnism, which would deny Aga Khan the role of a spiritual leader.

The evidence recorded by the court very explicitly shows that only a small percentage of the Khojah Muslims was willing to take orders from the Aga Khan.

A Christian judge appointed by the British Raj, who had nothing to do with Prophet Muhammad or Islam, decided for a community of Muslims whether their religious practices and beliefs should be regulated and dictated by a certain Persian “nobleman” or by the Sunnah (literally, custom) as practiced by the Prophet of Islam. The fate of nearly one million Khojah Muslims today, was sealed by a British decree signed by a Christian judge in 1866.

1841 A.D. — Aga Khan's “Stout assistance” to the British

In his Memoirs (p. 182) Aga Khan III recorded with pride the “stout assistance” rendered by his grandfather “to the British in their process of military and imperial expansion northwards and westwards from the Punjab” and “during the latter stages of the first Afghan War, in 1841 and 1842.”

Today, this “stout assistance” for the expansion of Christian Raj in India is regarded by many scholars as a disservice to Islam. Willi Frischauer writes in *The Aga Khans* (Bodley Head, London, p. 48):

The Aga Khan was gratified when his help in the Afghan war was recognized: 'As a reward for my services,' he wrote, 'the General gave me presents. He further assigned to me the territory of Moola Rusheed yielding an income of forty thousand rupees.'

Betrayal avenged by Baluchi Mirs

When Aga Khan I came to Sind from Afghanistan, he and his army were given shelter by Mir Nasir Khan of Sind. When Sir Charles Napier was about to attack the Mirs (Amirs), the Aga Khan had promised the Mirs his support. “When the British attacked Sind, the Aga Khan led his own cavalry regiment in the field by their [British] side. The campaign ended with the conquest of Sind...,” records Willi Frischauer (p. 48).

After the conquest of Sind, Aga Khan helped the British subjugate Baluchi Mir Shir (Shermohammad) Khan. He sent his brother Muhammad Baqir Khan and his horsemen to help the British, records Dr. Farhad Daftary (p. 511).

Aga Khan's betrayal was avenged by Mir Shir Khan. In 1843, the Mir and his cavalry attacked the camp of Aga Khan in the town of Zirukh (Sind) and pillaged his possessions. Noorum-Mubin records that seventy Ismailis died that night. The Aga Khan saved his life by fleeing on a horse in his night shirt in the darkness of night. During the flight, he fell

off his horse, became unconscious and had to be carried away to Hyderabad by his followers. Ismailis respect those killed at Zirukh as martyrs.

1898 A.D. — Aga Khan's assistance to Jewish settlement

In his Memoirs Aga Khan III recorded the personal assistance and services that he offered to his Zionist friend Haffkine, an eminent bacteriologist of Bombay. Professor Haffkine was a Soviet Jew and a strong proponent of the settlement of European Jews in the Holy Land. The Jewish professor had successfully convinced the Aga Khan that establishment of Zionism in Palestine was a good idea. Aga Khan writes (p. 151): “As Haffkine propounded it, I thought this sort of Zionism useful and practical.”

In 1898, Aga Khan approached Sultan Abdul Hamid of the Ottoman Empire with a statement for the establishment of a Jewish settlement in Palestine. The statement was prepared by Rabbi Kahn, who was introduced to Aga Khan by Professor Haffkine. The scheme was turned down by the Sultan. The late Aga Khan, who had been claiming all along to have Arab blood in his veins, expressed his disappointment in these words:

However, the scheme, good or bad as it may have been, was turned down by the Sultan, and I heard no more of it. I must say its rejection has always seemed to me one of Abdul Hamid's greatest blunders.

1906 A.D. — Aga Khan dismisses “Khojah Joostis”

Immediately after the Haji Bibi Case of 1905, Aga Khan dismissed the jurisprudential committees of the Khojah Community. These committees were operative in India from olden days and were known as “Khojah Joostis.” Aga Khan replaced these Joostis with “Shi'ah Imami Ismaili Councils.” The elected members of the Khojah Joostis were generally elderly members of the community, including Mukhi and Kamadia, and were selected by the Jama'at on the merits of their experience to resolve Jama'ati problems. The office-holders of the Ismailia Councils were now appointed by the Aga Khan. The democratic process was thus abolished.

Since 1906, appointments for the posts of Local, Regional, Provincial, National, and World Councils have been hand-picked (nominated) by the Aga Khans. Recently, appeals by Ismailis have appeared in the local papers of Africa requesting the Aga Khan to restore the democratic process of election for these and other administrative posts in the community.

1910 A.D. — “Khojahs” become “Obedient Agakhanis”

In 1910, Aga Khan promulgated a legally drafted “Shi'ah Imami Ismaili Constitution,” ordained under his seal. He made a strict Farman (religious pronouncement) to his Jama'at, commanding them to abide by the promulgated laws. In 1906, the democratic process of electing community leadership was abolished from the Khojah Jama'at. Now the nominated leaders of the Jama'at were obligated to decide the Jama'ati problems within

the frame work of a constitution that was ordained by the Aga Khan. The essential role of the nominated members of the Aga Khan's "Shi'ah Imami Ismailia Councils" was and is to see that the Khojah Jama'at dutifully obeys the laws that are ordained by the Aga Khans from time to time.

The Constitution of 1910 has been periodically revised and upgraded. The most recent one was ordained in Geneva on December 13, 1986. The opening article of this Constitution is entitled "Power and Authority of Mawalana Hazar Imam." The opening clause reads:

1.1 Mawlana Hazar Imam has inherent right and absolute and unfettered power and authority over and in respect of all religious and Jamati matters of the Ismailis.

"A warm supporter of British rule in India"

Professor Alfred Guillaume writes in *Islam* (Cassell, London, p. 124):

The Agha Khan, a descendant of the chief of the Assassins, once a President of the All India Muslim League, was a warm supporter of British rule in India before the advent of the new State of Pakistan.

The late Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, referring to the famous Round Table Conferences that were held in London to decide the future of India, wrote in *Nehru: The First Sixty Years* (New York, 1965, p. 256):

... he [Aga Khan III] could thoroughly appreciate and represent our rulers' interests and viewpoint. He was an able representative of Imperialist England at that Round Table Conference. The irony of it was that he was supposed to represent India.

Harry J. Greenwall writes in *His Highness The Aga Khan* (p. 234):

In those far off days when Queen Victoria paid heed to him, His Highness worked heart and soul for Britain. True, when the question of Indian independence arose, the Aga Khan supported India's claim, but he always added that India should remain within the framework of the British Empire....There were from time to time troubles in Egypt, but never did one hear one word of comment unfavorable to Britain from the Aga Khan.

Petition for a territorial state rejected

We learn from the Aga Khan's *Memoirs* (pp. 285- 86) that following the Second Round Table Conference held in London in 1932, Aga Khan approached the Government of India and suggested that he might be given a territorial State so that he could join the company of Indian Maharajahs and Princes. The offer was, however, rejected by the Macdonald government and a story circulated that Aga Khan was deeply offended and

that the Government of India disapproved of Aga Khan for having made such an approach.

Harry Greenwall writes (p. 190) that on Monday, 23 July 1934, the matter was taken up in the British House of Commons when a question was asked of the Secretary of State for India by Major-General Sir Alfred Knox. The Secretary had nothing more to add to the answer given in the Indian Legislative Assembly. The land on which the Aga Khan had his eye was in the Province of Sind.

Willi Frischauer writes in *The Aga Khans* (p. 116): "...the Aga Khan never completely abandoned the idea and his successor has been toying with it ever since his accession."

Aga Khan — a secret agent of the British Raj

Harry Greenwall writes in *The Aga Khan* (p. 63):

As long as the British Raj ruled in India, the secret services of the Aga Khan were in constant demand....He himself refers to such services, not as secret service, but as 'secret diplomatic missions.'

... It was in 1913 that the Aga Khan was requested to undertake a very delicate and secret diplomatic mission to Cairo. The Khedive of Egypt was under grave suspicion.

...The Aga Khan's mission produced evidence that the Khedive was prepared, in the event of War, to support Germany. Sustained by the Aga Khan's evidence, the British Government decided on a master stroke.

In 1843, Aga Khan I disclosed the battle plans of Nasir Khan, the Talpur Amir of Kalat, to Major James Outram, the British political agent in Sind. As a result, the British camp was saved from a night attack, records Dr. Farhad Daftary (p. 510).

"These are our intercessors with Allah"

They serve, besides Allah, things that hurt them not nor profit them, and they say:
"These are our intercessors with Allah." Say: "Do ye indeed inform Allah of something He knows not, in the heavens or on earth? — Glory to Him! And far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!" Holy Qur'an 10/18

Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali:

When we shut our eyes to God's glory and goodness, and go after false gods, we give some plausible excuse to ourselves, such as that they will intercede for us. But how can stocks and stones intercede for us? And how can men intercede for us, when they themselves have need of God's Mercy? Even the best and noblest cannot intercede as of right, but only with His permission (X-3). To pretend that there are other powers than

God is to invent lies and to teach God. There is nothing in heaven or earth that He does not know, and there is no other like unto Him.

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6

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THE THIRD PHASE OF PROSELYTIZATION

A radical transformation

As we have seen during the second phase of proselytization, the Khojah Sunni Muslims were converted to Khojah Shi'ah Ithna'ashries. The third phase started when Aga Khan III began making Farmans to his followers and prescribing his own formulas.

We learn from the autobiography of Aga Khan I, historical records and court documents that the ancestors of Aga Khan III were Sufi Ithna'ashris. They had introduced the faith of their ancestors to the converts of Pir Sadr-din. The proselytized Sunni Khojahs were now following the rituals of Shi'ah Ithna'ashriyya Tariqah. But, the concept of Imamah (for the first Imam 'Ali) was that of 'Ali-un-Waliy- Allah (meaning, 'Ali is the beloved of Allah) and not of 'Ali Sahi Allah (meaning, 'Ali is truly Allah). Aga Khan I was respected and revered by his followers as a Sufi Master, who are often called in India "Pirji" or "Pir Salamut," and after the Khojah Case, as an Imam in the Ithna'ashriyya sense (similar to the late Ayatollah Khomeini). Since the Aga Khan had claimed his descent from Prophet's daughter, he was also given the honour that is normally bestowed upon every other Sayyid by a Muslim.

Aga Khan I used to receive the Dassondh, very similar to the Khums received today by the Ithna'ashri Aqas in Persia and Iraq, from the Khojah Ithna'ashries. At a court hearing in 1905 (p. 432), the offerings to the Aga Khans was remarked as very similar in many respects to "Peter's Pence," which had been offered to the Popes for so many years.

Khojah Ismailis used to recite their Namaz (Salah) facing Mecca, read the Qur'an, attend the Majlises of Muharram and recite the Qissahs and Bayyans (narrations and tales) of the Martyrdom of Imam Husayn, during the month of Muharram in the Jama'at khanas. Willi Frischauer writes in *The Aga Khans* (p. 50):

The Aga Khan [the first] took his religious duties very seriously, visited the jamatkhana, the Ismaili religious centre, on all holy days and led the community in prayer on the anniversary of Hazrat Huseyn's martyrdom, presiding over the ritual distribution of water mixed with the holy dust of Kerbela.

After the death of Aga Khan II, these ancestral concepts were systematically thrown out and the new concepts were introduced. The faith that was practiced by the ancestors of the Agakhani Ismailis during the period of the first Aga Khan and the one that is practiced today is not the same. Between these periods, there has been a radical transformation. This transmutation in the history of proselytizing of the Khojahs, who were now observing Ithna'ashriyya rituals is fascinating as well as eye-opening. In this chapter we shall observe the circumstances that influenced this shift and its definitive

effects upon the religious beliefs of the Agakhani Khojahs today. We shall also examine how confused the followers of the Aga Khan were during this transition period.

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“Petit prince cheri”

In April 1881, Aga Khan I died in Bombay and his son became the next Imam. Aga Khan II's Imamate lasted for a brief period of four years. During that period a school for Khojah children was opened in Bombay. His interests in life were horse breeding, racing, and big- game hunting. Aga Khan II died in August 1885. Like his father, he was a devout Ithna'ashri. Aga Khan III recorded in his Memoirs that his father died in Poona but his body was sent to Iraq, at his own request, to be buried at Nejaf on the west bank of the Euphrates, near the tomb of Imam 'Ali, one of the holiest places on earth for the Shi'ahs.

After the death of Aga 'Aly Shah (Aga Khan II), his young widow, Shams al-Muluk, who was popularly known among the British circles as Lady 'Aly Shah, the mother of a child of eight, became a sort of trustee and a behind- the-scenes acting leader of the Khojahs. Aga Khan III, the forty-eight Imam, was yet petit prince cheri and his uncle Aga Jangi Shah was appointed as his guardian.

Lady 'Aly Shah was very strict and a dedicated Ithna'ashri lady. She always wore a chador (Hijab). She was deeply versed in Persian and Arabic literature. Every night, the child would go to his mother's apartments and join with her in prayer whose religion was resolutely practical, records Aga Khan. It was Lady `Aly Shah's desire that she should die in Iraq and be buried in Nejaf, near Kerbala. Following a serious illness in January, she was sent to Baghdad, where she died on February 5, 1938 and was buried next to the tomb of her husband.

Dumasia records, Aga Khan III wrote to his friend: “No loss, not even that of my son who died in infancy which was a terrible blow to me as a father, has been quite so terrible as this.” The Aga Khan dedicated his book 'India in Transition' to his mother.

“Relentlessly was I held on the chain” — Aga Khan

The strict discipline to which, at the age of eight, the new Imam was subjected was rigid, and even the little free time that he was allowed was subject to invasion by followers who brought him gifts, etc. In return they received thanks, blessings, and benedictions — but as a child he resented the fact that they came during the small amount of free time allowed by the curriculum and never, never during lesson time, records Aga Khan in his Memoirs (p. 12).

The young prince grew up feeling a deep frustration with “the typical and unchanging pattern” of his life, and expressed them in these words:

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“There was no room for a holiday for me, a month, a fortnight, even a week off the chain; at the most a rare day. And relentlessly was I held on the chain.”

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Narrating an incident in which he and his cousin were caught stealing books from a book shop in Bombay, he writes (p. 20): “But there was one small impediment: my mother allowed me no pocket money.”

Aga Khan's hatred for Ithna'ashri Maulvis

Aga Khan developed a hatred for the strict regimentation he was subjected to by his mother and uncles. As he grew up, he developed the same resentment for the religious training he was subjected to, as well as for his tutors (the Ithna'ashri Maulvis) and their philosophy. Here are a few extracts from his Memoirs (pp. 12 and 18):

Thereafter I had three hours' instruction in Arabic....After dinner came the horror of horrors. I was set down to two hours of calligraphy of the dreariest and most soul-destroying kind. My mother had been impressed by the advice — the foolish advice as it turned out — of Arabic and Persian scholars and pedants, who had assured her that calligraphy in the classical Persian and Arabic scripts was of the highest importance....My mother, my uncles, and everyone else in our household united in compelling me to this horrible calligraphy. It was in fact a very real martyrdom for me....

Then I would have to go back to my gloomy treadmill and hear my tutor cursing and railing as was his habit. Since he was a Shia of the narrowest outlook he concentrated his most ferocious hatred not on non-Muslims, not even on those who persecuted the Prophet, but on the caliphs and companions of the Prophet....

This form of Shiaism attains its climax during the month of Moharram with its lamentations and its dreadful cursings. Reaction against its hatred, intolerance, and bigotry has, I know, colored my whole life, and I have found my answer in the simple prayer that God in His infinite mercy will forgive the sins of all Muslims, the slayers and the slain....

Aga Khan vents his hatred

In 1899, the petit prince, who was now twenty- two, got his first opportunity to address his Jama'at in Africa. He was no longer “held on the chain.” His childhood hatred was now vented in Zanzibar on 13 July in the following Farman:

Within ten, twenty or thirty years, the Ithna'ashri religion will be worn out. After 100 years the Ithna'ashri religion will not exist at all. It will not

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exist in Iran either because that religion's base is not on Aq'l [the power of reasoning]. Our religion's base is on Aq'l.

Every night during his childhood, Aga Khan would join his mother in prayer, which was an Ithna'ashri Salah (Namaz). Elderly Ismailis who had seen the young Aga Khan, accompanied by his mother and uncles, attend Majlises of Muharram that were held in the Mughal (Ithna'ashri) Imambaras of Bombay and Poona were surprised to hear this Farman denouncing the faith of this parents and grand-parents. Below is an anecdote often related by Ismaili missionaries in their sermons.

“Hum Husayn” not “Hai Husayn”

An elderly Ismaili requested Aga Khan to explain the reasoning behind his participation, during the early years of his Imamate, in the rituals of Matam (passion play), wherein the participants raise their hands, one after another, and beat their chests in a frenzy, yelling “Hai Husayn, Hai Husayn,” when according to his own Farmans, made a few years later, he was a living Husayn and his followers should not mourn or wear black dresses during the month of Muharram.

In the words of the missionaries, the Aga Khan replied: “When I was lowering my hand to my chest, I was pointing it at my chest and saying 'Hum Husayn, Hum Husayn' instead of 'Hai Husayn, Hai Husayn.’” “Hai Husayn” is an expression of grief very similar to “Oh! Husayn.” The phrase “Hum Husayn” translates to “I am Husayn.”

Such a remark would reflect adversely on the purity and straightforwardness of the claimant, to fulfill his parental responsibilities as a “spiritual” Father and Mother, was never thought of by the missionaries, who were more desperate to defend the action of their Imam during the early years of his Imamate.

Accepted it was a facade, as claimed by the Aga Khan, but the above narrative clearly shows that his family members who participated routinely in these ceremonies were Ithna'ashries. In other words the Imamate of Ismail and his descendants was not recognized, even by these immediate family members of the Aga Khan, well into the first few decades of the twentieth century.

1905 — Confused followers of the Aga Khan

The court records from the Haji Bibi Case indicate that the witnesses appearing before Judge Russell were “Khojahs” but they did not know the distinction between the sect of “Ismailis” and “Ithna'ashries.”

For those who are unfamiliar with the fundamental differences that separate these two sub-sects of Shi'ah Muslims, here is a brief explanation. Agakhani Shi'a Ismailis believe in an ever-living Hazar (present) Imam. Karim Aga Khan is the their Hazar Imam. Shi'a Ithna'ashries believe in a Ghayab (hidden) Imam. Their last (twelfth) Imam disappeared in a grotto and is expected to return during the final period of this earth. These two concepts are basically opposite. For any Shi'ah Muslim, Imam is the base of his religion,

hence he must know with certainty the past and present status of his Imam. Below are four extracts from the Bombay Law Reporter (1908, Volume 11, pp.438, 440-42, 454):

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1. The first witness of the plaintiff goes as far as to say that he considers His Highness the Aga Khan and his family as his Murshed, i.e., spiritual leader....He concludes by saying that he is a Khojah, but he is neither Ismaili nor an Asnashari. He does not know the distinction between the two.

2. [Witness] Fazulbhoy Joomabhoy Lalji in the commencement of his evidence says there is no difference between the faith of a Khoja Ismaili and an Asnashari and he said to me that the Asnasharis believed in 12 Imams. Khoja Ismailis believe the same and never believed anything else. And again he says at page 345 that he really believes the first Aga Khan was an Asnashari.

3. Witness No. 3, Nathu Virji, is neither Shia Ismaili nor Shia Asnashari. He cannot say what sort of a Shia Khoja he is. He does not understand what is meant by Shia Ismailis nor Shia Asnasharis. But he believes only in the 12 Imams.

4. [Witness] Mahomed Nanji, commission agent and doing business on his own account....But although he says that he follows at present the Khoja Shia Ismaili faith, he cannot explain what Shia Ismaili means, and to the question "If those who follow the Shia Ismaili faith believe in Hazrat Ali, and those who have succeeded him on the gadi down to the present Aga Khan as their Imams, do you still consider yourself as a Khojah following the Shia Ismaili faith," he answered "No;" from which it would appear as if his views on the subject of his own religion were somewhat obscure to say the least.

If the converted Khojahs were truly Ismailis believing in the Imamate of the ancestors of the Aga Khan from day one of their conversion by Pir Sadr-din, then such confusion would not have lasted for seven centuries. Secondly, if Aga Khan I, who arrived in 1840, had converted the Khojahs as Nizari Imami Ismailis upon his arrival, then these confusions would not have lasted for seven decades, by the time the witnesses appeared before the judge. The only logical answer would be that the indoctrination of the theory of "Hazar Imam" must be a very recent one, for the converted Khojah Ithna'ashries, the then followers of the Aga Khan I and II.

"Aga Khan invented a new Doowa"

The following is an extract from the judgment document delivered by Justice Russell in the Haji Bibi Case (p. 425). (The name "Coochick" stands for Aga Coochick Shah a cousin of Aga Khan III; the name "Jungi" stands for Aga Jungi Shah the uncle of Aga Khan III).

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Thus Coochick, p. 187 says:

“My case is that the present faith dates from Jungi's death, or a year after. The fanatic followers of the Aga Khan do date from that time. I cannot say before or after Jungi's death. The new religion has been going 15 years since Aga Khan's new Bhagats started preaching, 2 years before Jungi's death. I cannot say Doowa is a new invention of the last 12 or 14 years, since the present Aga Khan came of age. This new invention was never heard of before Jungi's death. Aga Khan has invented a new Doowa in Gujrati, the former one was in Arabic.”

Ismailis are told that their Gujrati Du'a was written by Pir Sadr-din. The above document tell us that like the majority of Ismaili Ginans, the Gujrati Du'a was also a recent composition that had been attributed to Pir Sadr-din, who as we have seen earlier on, was a Sunni Da'i.

The Judge had dined twice with Aga Khan and asked him to dinner

In the Haji Bibi Case, Justice Russell's judgment went totally in favor of the Aga Khan. The plaintiff lost each and every one of the 128 points. The counsel for plaintiff and those defendants who supported the plaintiff retired from the case and walked out of the court. From the following text recorded by Justice Russell, one can easily visualize the influence of the Aga Khan upon the judges of the Bombay High Courts.

At the beginning of the case to my astonishment it was suggested by plaintiff's counsel that I [Justice Russell] should not try the case as I was what he termed a friend of Aga Khan's. Mr. Inverarity [defendant's counsel] replied that in that respect I was in no different position probably than all the other Judges in Bombay. I said I had exchanged calls with the Aga Khan and had dined twice with him and had asked him to dinner and he had not been able to come.

Today, under the similar circumstances a judge would immediately retire and ask for a transfer of the case.

The Judge clears the Court

Immediately following the above recorded text we learn that during the trial of the Haji Bibi Case, when Aga Khan was being cross-examined, particularly on the subject of his own personal beliefs as a Shi'ah Muslim, the judge asked the Court to be cleared of all persons that had come to witness the trial. He further ordered that the evidence given by the Aga Khan should not to be reported or published, which in the judge's opinion would probably create hostility between the Muslim communities in Bombay.

Under the circumstances the plaintiff (Haji Bibi), instructed her counsel not to proceed with the case. Thereupon, the counsel for the plaintiff and for the defendants who supported the plaintiff's case withdrew.

Followers of Aga Khan admonished by Iraqi Mullahs

Since the rituals of Muharram and ceremonial rites of martyrdom were introduced by Aga Khan I, every year hundreds of Shi'ite Khojahs were making regular pilgrimage to the holy Shi'ite sites in Iraq. Later on, when the Islamic Salah was replaced with Gujrati Du'a, the Iraqi Mullahs were shocked to learn that the followers of Aga Khan III, who were reciting this Gujrati Du'a instead of Arabic Namaz, had broken the most fundamental tenet of Islam itself. They were now venerating Hazrat 'Ali and therewith the Aga Khan as "Allah" by reciting "Ali Sahi [truly] Allah."

The astonished Mullahs admonished the followers of Aga Khan and explained that worship of 'Ali or the Aga Khan as an "associate," "manifestation," or "incarnation" of Allah; or truly Allah, nullifies their prayers, voids their fasting, pilgrimage, etc. In the hereafter, hell would be their place of abode if they did not stop reciting that kind of Shahadah (confession of faith) in their Du'a. The admonished Ismailis requested Aga Khan III to change the wordings of the Shahadah in the Du'a to "Ali-un-Waliy-Allah" meaning, "Ali is the beloved of Allah." The Aga Khan refused to change the Shahadah and the group of enlightened Khojah Ithna'ashries left the Jama'at.

How could a God cease to be a God?

In 1956, under pressure from his Syrian followers, Aga Khan III changed the Ismaili Du'a from Gujrati to Arabic. He also changed the wordings of the Shahadah from "Ali Sahi (truly) Allah" to "Aliyyullah." The later phrase translates "The 'Ali, The Allah." But, in the book of Ismaili Du'a it is translated as "Ali is from Allah." Today, by the virtue of this willful mistranslation, Agakhani Ismailis claim that they are not venerating Karim Aga Khan as God.

The fact that the Du'a had to be changed in order to make the explicit affirmation that 'Ali and by inference, Aga Khan was "truly Allah" implicit, indicates the growing importance of Islam on the world stage. Yet, to say otherwise would not only go against all the Ismaili religious practices, but even expose this "religion" to the charge of hypocrisy. How could a God cease to be a God? This is why the explicit statement was converted into a less explicit one which could then be mistranslated deliberately to such modern needs as shown in my earlier publication, Understanding Ismailism.

Aga Khan's Mukhi stabbed by an Ithna'ashri

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Qadir Husayn Kerbalai, an Ithna'ashri Mullah, settled in Bombay. In 1862, he opened a Madrasa (religious school) to indoctrinate people in the Ithna'ashri school of thought. Thereafter Mullah Qadir returned to Kerbala. At the end of the nineteenth century he was invited by some Khojahs of India. Shi'ah Muftahid in Iraq sent Mullah Qadir Husayn to Bombay. When Ismailis became aware of his activities they began threatening the Mullah and his students.

One day the Mullah's favorite student, Killu, was mercilessly beaten by fanatic Ismailis. Killu remained hospitalized for some time and became temporarily invalid. After recovering from his injuries, he stabbed the chief Mukhi of the Aga Khan with a knife. Mukhi Hasan died. Killu admitted to the killing and was sentenced to death by hanging. The court trials of Killu, as well as his subsequent funeral procession and burial, brought the dissident Khojahs out in the open. Prominent among them were Haji Dewji Jamal, Haji Gulam Ali Haji Ismail, and Haji Khalfan Rattansi.

Two Ismaili Fida'is attack three Ithna'ashries

In 1901, the splinter group made an announcement in the newspapers and established a Khojah Ithna'ashri Jama`at in Bombay. The group became known as Chhoti (small) Jama`at, and the mainstream was called Bari (big) Jama`at. When the splinter group decided to build their separate Mosque in Bombay, it was rumored that Aga Khan, before his departure for Europe, had offered to contribute financially. The group members rejected this offer when they learned that Aga Khan wanted to have administrative control over the Mosque, similar to the one he had over the Jama`at khanas.

I have come across correspondence in which the author writes that Sir Sultan Mohammed Shah, Aga Khan III, had agreed to inaugurate the Khojah Ithna'ashri Mosque in Bombay, known as Pala Gali Mosque, upon his return from Europe.

However, when Sir Sultan Mohammed was on board, returning to Bombay from Southampton, two Fidayeen's within the Ismaili community, seeking the cue from the 'Hashsashins' of Alamud took upon themselves, the recourse to murder Haji Allarakia, Laljee Sajjan and Abdullah Laljee, the three known protagonists of the Isna'sheri faction whom the Ismaili 'Hashsashins' identified as the destroyers of the Jammāt....Whether or not, the 'Hashsasins' were sponsored by the Aga Khan Sir Sultan Mohammed or his mother Lady Ali Shah is an issue that will remain shrouded in the mysteries of Mankind,....

This murderous attack by two Fidayeen (self sacrificing fanatics) was instrumental in creating a permanent division between the splinter group and the mainstream. Haji Allarakia and Laljee Sajjan succumbed to their injuries. The third victim, Abdullah Laljee, survived the attack because the weapon was blunt and the assailant was prevented from making a second stab by Noormohamed Dossa. Abdullah Laljee was of the founding members of the Ithna'ashri Jamat. He played a leading role in the building of the Pala Gali Mosque.

Severance of all social and religious contacts

It was reported during the police investigation that bags of golden guineas were discovered in the hutments of these Fida'is, and a hidden hand was suspected in this murderous attack on the Ithna'ashri activists. The Fida'is were tried, convicted, and hanged. Their bodies were buried in a Muslim graveyard in Worli, a suburb of Bombay.

Ismailis who had hypocritically disassociated themselves from the Fida'is during the trials began paying their respect to the martyrs by visiting their graves in Worli. Later on, at the instance of the Aga Khan, the remains of the Assassins were removed from the Muslim graveyard and buried in an Ismaili graveyard in the Khojah Mohallah. Aga Khan was now openly criticized and insulted by the dissidents for the assassination of their protagonists.

In those days, Aga Khan used to commute in a four-horse carriage from his residence in Mazagon to the Chief Jama'at khana in Khadak. His carriage used to pass through a narrow lane known as Pala Gali. The splinter group had constructed their mosque on Pala Gali and it was likely that there would be a direct confrontation between the two rival groups during the journey. Aga Khan was obliged to change his route. The supporters of the new mosque began residing in this lane and Pala Gali became a landmark for Ithna'ashri Khojahs of Bombay. Even today, Ismaili men and women going to their Jama'at khana avoid travelling through Pala Gali. My brothers and sister and I were told by our parents not to journey through that lane and believe me, we were afraid to do that.

Aga Khan ordered severance of all social and religious contacts with the Ithna'ashri Khojahs. Ismailis were indoctrinated by their missionaries not to eat food or even drink a glass of water in an Ithna'ashri home. Rule number 142 of the Karachi Council authorized any member of the Council to lodge a complaint in the Council against any Ismaili murid taking part in any feast, marriage, or mourning of a Khojah dissident Ithna'ashri. The offender could be excommunicated by the Council. These social restrictions divided many Khojah families permanently. Even today, there are many Ismailis who will not drink, dine or do business with the members of the Khojah Ithna'ashri Jama'at because they are considered dissidents. Khojah Ithna'ashries, on their part, contest that the Agakhani Ismailis are the ones who have deviated from the path of their ancestors and have changed the faith. The truth of course was that both had deviated from the original path shown by Pir Sadr-din. However, while Ithna'ashries still remained within the broad belief of Islam, the Ismailis transformed 'Ali into God and thus broke with Islam itself in philosophical term as well as in practice. Many Muslims who have known the inner secrets of the Agakhanis refuse to acknowledge them as Muslims.

1910 A. D. — Persian Nizaris change religious practices

Farhad Daftary records in *The Isma'ilis, Their History and Doctrines* (p. 537):

Around 1910, in line with the directives issued to the Qasim-Shahi Nizaris of other countries, Agha Khan III began to introduce certain changes in the religious practices and rituals of his Persian followers. In particular, he changed or simplified some of those religious rituals that the Persian Shi'is, like other Muslims, had categorized as the *furu`-i din*, comprising the positive rules of the Islamic law, such as the rituals of praying, ablution, fasting, the hajj pilgrimage, and so forth.

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Hitherto the Persian Nizari Ismailis were observing the Shi'ah rituals and practices that were observed by all other Twelver Shi'ahs. Now they were ordered to observe the practices observed by the Khojah Ismailis of India. Dr. Daftary writes (p. 537):

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But now they were required to set themselves drastically apart from the Twelvers, asserting their own identity as a religious community. For instance, they now recited the entire list of the Nizari Imams recognized by the Qasim-Shahis at the end of their daily prayers. They were also discouraged from joining the Twelvers at their mosques on special occasions, and from participating in the Shi'i mourning rituals of Muharram, because the Nizaris had a living and present (mawjud wa hadir) imam and did not need to commemorate any of their dead imams. Indeed, they were now required to observe only those religious prescriptions that were directly endorsed or issued by their living imam.

On page 539, Dr. Daftary records:

Agha Khan III was pleased by the progress made by his Persian followers when he visited them in 1951. He was particularly glad to see that the Isma'ili women had abandoned the chadur, the traditional Muslim veil worn in Persia.

Ismaili rituals that have become history

Elderly Ismailis who have lived their early years in Bombay or Zanzibar will confirm that many of the Ithna'ashriyya rites and rituals that were introduced into the Khojah community by the Aga Khan I were diligently practiced by the ancestors of the Khojah Ismailis until the 1940s. I distinctly remember my childhood as an Agakhani Ismaili. The Chief Jama'at khana of Bombay, built in 1920, was across from the house where I grew up. Standing on my balcony, I could watch and hear the religious ceremonies taking place in the Jama'at khana. In most of these ceremonies I took part as a young volunteer serving cold water and Joora to the congregants. I also remember serving "Haleem and Nan" or "Kaliya and Paw" (a special dish of meat and bread) on the 10th, 20th, and 30th day Muharram, and on the "Chelum" (40th day of martyrdom) of Imam Husayn. Ismailis from the various quarters of Bombay used to assemble in the compound of the Darkhana (Chief) Jama'at khana for these annual feasts. A group of Ismailis used to build a Shabil of Hazrat Abbas near the main entrance of the Darkhana Jama'at khana and distribute Sharbat (sweetened milk and water) to the passers-by in memory of the martyrs.

Ismailis also used to visit the Mausoleum of Aga Khan I in Hasanabad, Bombay, to offer special prayers during the month of Muharram. They would receive a packet of Malida (a mixture of roasted flour and sugar) from the Bawa Sahib, who was a close relative of the Aga Khan. On 'Id al-Adha (literally, "the feast of the sacrifice"), the ceremonies of "Kurbani" (sacrifice of a dozen or so goats and a couple of cows), after the early morning 'Id prayers, within the compounds of the Chief Jama'at khana was an annual event.

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On the twenty-third night of Ramadhan, Sayyid Mustaqali, another close relative of Aga Khan, would lead a special ceremony of reciting nearly 100 times or so the five venerated names of the "Pujtan-pak." The Jama`at would be asked to place a small square card, printed with the names of the Punjtan- pak (Ali, Muhammad, Fatima, Hasan, Husayn) on their heads (caps) and join the recitations. Often, my card would fall off from my red fez cap, which we students were obliged to wear in Jama`at khanas and religious classes. Thereafter, Mustaqali would recite a special Du'a in Gujrati wherein the entire genealogy of the Aga Khan, over 200 generations and incarnations, starting with "Fish" the first creation would be recited. And, thereafter a special Niyaz (Holy Water), prepared from the clay of Kerbala would be distributed to the Jama`at. The ceremonies of that special night would conclude with the forgiving of sins, by sprinkling the Holy Water on the face of every individual. These rituals show that there were in existence, during my childhood, beliefs within Ismaili Khojahs which had their roots for in the Ithna'ashriyya traditions such as the sacrosanctity of "clay of Kerbala." The importation of clay from Kerbala has now been discontinued as it bears no more significance.

Today, the majority of Ismaili students and young scholars have no knowledge of these and other rituals that were performed by their parents half a century ago because the history of the religious practices of the Agakhani Ismailis has never been written.

Niyaz was made from the clay of Kerbala

There would arrive from time to time, at the Chief Jama`at khana of Bombay, a shipment of special clay from Kerbala. This holy clay was believed to be sanctified by the blood of the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn. I remember taking part in the making of tiny clay balls the size of a dried black pepper, along with other Ismailis. These would then be distributed to all other Jama`at khanas.

Every morning, every Thursday evening, and on a new moon night, the person who would lead a special Du'a of Ghat-paat would dissolve one ball of clay into a bowl of water while reciting the Du'a and prepare Niyaz (Holy Water). Once the Niyaz was prepared, Ismailis would rush (today they form a queue) towards the table on which the Niyaz was placed. Upon reaching the table, they would place a cash contribution in a plate, pick up a tiny cup filled with the holy water and drink it to purify the body and spirit.

Today, the clay of Kerbala which used to bear religious significance until the early years of the Imamate of Aga Khan III bears no more significance and as such it is not imported any more. Aga Khan himself recites a small prayer over a bowl of water and the Holy Water is ready for distribution. Almost everything that is considered "Holy" by the Agakhani Ismailis has its roots into "Hazar Imam." The Niyaz that used to be distributed on Thursday nights is now distributed on Friday nights. And the sins are forgiven with the Holy Water on the night of the new moon.

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Aga Khan was too afraid to remove a Minbar

Aga Khan III systematically replaced almost all the ancestral rites and rituals of the Twelvers, such as prayers, ablutions, recitation of the Qur'an, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, and of paying homage to the martyrs of Kerbala with his own prescriptions. However, Aga Khan did not uproot and throw out a Minbar (pronounced Mimbar; a pulpit in a mosque) of Hazrat Abbas and a Hoj (sunken pond) of Bibi Fatima in front of the pulpit, which were built near the main entrance on the main floor of the Darkhana Jama`at khana in Bombay. These ancient relics built with white marble during the days of Lady `Ali Shah, have survived as the living proof of Khojah community's recent history.

During my school days, twice a week or so, the sunken pond (Hoj) of Bibi Fatima would be filled with a special sweetened milk (120 quarts) topped with almonds and pistachios. The milk would then be distributed to the Ismaili boys and girls in their schools. Hazrat Abbas was one of the most respected martyrs of Kerbala, and to uproot his marble pulpit from its foundation or to cover up the Hoj of the beloved wife of Hazrat `Ali, Bibi Fatima, would be naked aggression against Shi`ism. Aga Khan was perhaps too afraid to take upon himself such a venture.

I could see from the balcony of my house that many Ismailis who were steadfast in their ancestral practices would visit this Minbar of Hazrat Abbas and recite their Namaz (Islamic Salah of Shi`ah Ithna'ashriyya Tariqah) facing the pulpit. Thereafter, they would offer Fateha for the martyrs of Kerbala. A few of these visitors would sit near the pulpit of Hazrat Abbas and read verses from the Holy Qur'an. Copies of the Qur'an for recitation were available at Minbar but none were available in the prayer hall of the Jama`at khana, located one floor above. Ismailis are led into believing that they have a "Speaking Qur'an" — the Aga Khan, whose Farman changes with the times. Hence it is superfluous to read a "Silent Qur'an" that is 1400 years old.

I have heard stories from elderly Ismailis that there was a time when there used to be prayer rugs for Namaz and copies of the Holy Qur'an for recitation in the Jama`at khanas of Bombay. For some reason, during a court battle, they were lowered into a well of the Khadak Jama`at khana and the well was sealed.

However, one physical evidence that has survived from the past is a huge water tank with rows of taps and pedestals to do Wadhu (ablution). Similar rows of taps are also to be found in the old Jama`at khanas of East Africa. Ismailis do not perform Wadhu before reciting their Du`a. Muslims are required to do ablution before reciting the Namaz or the Qur'an. The new Jama`at khanas that are built in Canada and Europe at a cost of millions of dollars do not have facilities for ablution.

This also supports the stories that the converted Ithna'ashri Khojahs, the followers of Aga Khan I and II, used to perform ablution before reciting their Namaz and reading of the Qur'an. Several elderly relatives of my friends and my wife have personally confirmed to me that their grandfathers used to recite Namaz and read the Qur'an, in particular those whose ancestral roots are in Kutchh and Zanzibar.

Aga Khan's concept of Nubuwwa and Imamah

In a small town of Kutchh named Mundra, Aga Khan III made a Farman which is published in a Gujrati book, Kutchh na Farman (pp. 28-29). The translation reads as follows:

When Nabi Mohammed Mustafa departed from this world he appointed Pir Imam Hasan as his successor to carry on the work. Similarly, Murtaza Ali appointed Imam Husayn as the Imam after him.

Note: The mainstream Shi'ahs consider Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn as Imam No. 2 and 3 respectively. The Agakhani Ismailis have excluded the name of Imam Hasan from the list of their Imams and placed him in the list of Ismaili Pirs as the second Pir.

In the Ismaili hierarchy Pir is a preacher who is appointed by an Imam to do the preaching. By declaring the successors of Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, as Pirs, and declaring the successors of Hazrat 'Ali as the Imams, Aga Khan III raised his own status higher than that of the Prophet.

Quranic verses reconstituted to establish further authority

In 1956, Aga Khan III replaced the old Gujrati Du'a with an Arabic Du'a. The majority of Agakhani Ismailis are unaware of the fact that the Aga Khan has introduced a reconstituted verse of the Qur'an in this new Du'a. Two fragmented portions from two separate verses from two different chapters were joined to make this reconstituted verse. It was done to firmly establish "the knowledge and authority of everything" in Imam-e-Mubeen (manifest Imam), meaning the Aga Khan.

Below is the reconstituted verse of the Qur'an which Ismailis have been reciting since 1956, three times a day, in their prayers. The first two lines are from the (fragmented) beginning of verse 59 of Sura Nisa (chapter 4). The last two lines are from the (fragmented) ending of verse 12 of Sura Ya' Sin (chapter 36).

Ya ayyuhal-lazeena amanoo, ati-Ullah
wa atiur-Rasool wa Ulil Amri minkum
wa kulla shai'in ahsainahu
fee Imamim-mubeen.

Below is the translation of the above reconstituted verse, copied from the Book of Du'a published by the Ismailia Association for Africa (1963, p. 11). The words within the brackets are also faithfully reproduced from that book.

O ye, who believe! obey God and obey the Apostle and (obey) those who hold Authority from amongst you. And we have vested (the knowledge and authority) of everything in the manifest Imam.

If one were to read the translations of above two verses separately, and in their entirety, then he or she would know that Allah has neither granted the knowledge of everything, nor vested authority over everything, to any human being, living or dead. The deleted lines of the ending verse tells us that the subject matter has to do with “writing” and not “vesting.”

Those who distort the Book

**There is among them a section
who distort the Book with their tongues:
(as they read) you would think
It is a part of the Book,
But it is no part of the Book;
and they say, “That is from Allah,”
But it is not from Allah:
It is they who tell a lie against Allah,
And (well) they know it!
Holy Qur'an 3/78**

7

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PRE-FATIMID TO POST- ALAMUT PERIOD

Imam Ismail, the Seventh Imam

The name Ismailis is derived from the seventh descendant of the Prophet — the seventh Imam of the Ismailis — who was named Ismail. The Ithna'ashri Shi'ahs contend that Ismail, the elder son of Imam Jafar Sadik, died during the lifetime of his father in 762 a.d. As such, he cannot be recognized as a successor to his father, who died in 765 a.d. They contend that there are written documents to support the fact that a funeral procession of Ismail was held in Medina and attended by his father, and that the body of Ismail lies buried in Medina.

The Ithna'ashri scholars further claim that upon the death of Ismail, the designated Imamate was revoked by his father and redesignated in favor of the younger brother of Ismail, named Musa Kazim. Thus Musa Kazim, and not Ismail, became the next Imam. Ismaili historians record that the funeral procession as well as the burial ceremony of Ismail did take place in Medina but that it “was a mere ruse to mislead the enemies.” They claim that Ismail died in Syria, approximately ten years after the death of his father (between 775 and 777). According to them, Imam Ismail's body was most probably buried in Salamiyya.

Ismailis who used to visit Medina before the Saudi government leveled the ancient graves have personally confirmed to me of having offered “Fateha” at the grave of Imam Ismail in Medina. This practice does not seem to accord with the claims made by Agakhani Ismaili historians.

Eleventh Imam, the founder of the Fatimid dynasty

After an era of the first Dawr-i Satr (a period of concealment of the Imams), lasting for over a century, the Fatimid dynasty began in 909 a.d. with the emergence of the eleventh Ismaili Imam named `Ubayd Allah (Abd Allah) al-Mahdi. Since the Ismaili Imams had claimed their descent from Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace) through his daughter Fatima — wife of Prophet's cousin `Ali, the dynasty was called Fatimid.

Abbasid Caliphs, the contemporary of the Fatimids, had frequently questioned the authenticity of the claim made by `Ubayd Allah, the founder of the Fatimid dynasty, of him being a legitimate descendant of the Prophet. Dr. Farhad Daftary writes in *The Ismailis* (p. 108):

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It is necessary to point out at this juncture that the issue of the genealogy of the Fatimid caliphs has been the centre of numerous controversies, some of which seem to defy satisfactory solution. The ancestors of the Fatimids, according to the later official doctrine, were the Ismaili Imams who descended from Muhammad b. Ismail. However, the Ismaili sources are very reluctant to mention the names of the so-called 'hidden imams', the links between 'Ubayd Allah ('Abd Allah) and Muhammad b. Ismail b. Ja'far; individuals who lived under obscure circumstances. Their names are, in fact, not to be found in the earliest Ismaili sources which have so far come to light. Ivanow has interpreted this silence as reflecting an Ismaili prejudice against 'uncovering those whom God has veiled'. Consequently, there has developed some disagreement among the Ismailis concerning the names, number, sequence and the actual descent of the 'hidden imams', notwithstanding the traditional Fatimid version, namely, Muhammad b. Ismail, 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad, Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah, al-Husayn b. Ahmad, and 'Ubayd Allah ('Abd Allah) b. al-Husayn.

The Qaramati movement or Qaramatians (Carmathians), an offshoot of the Seveners, which formed a majority of the Ismailis in those days, did not recognize the Ismaili Imams that succeeded 'Ubayd Allah (al-Mahdi).

Fourteenth Imam and a glorious period of Ismaili history

After three unsuccessful previous attempts by his predecessors, Imam al-Mu'izz, the fourteenth Imam of the Ismaili, was successful in 969 a.d., in conquering Fustat, the then capital of Egypt. The actual honour of this conquest goes to Imam's commander of the Fatimid army, Abul Hasan Jawhar. In the north of Fustat, Jawhar built a new city al-Qahira (Cairo), which became the capital of Egypt and the seat of the Fatimid dynasty until its fall in 1171 a.d. In 970, Jawhar also laid a foundation of the famous Mosque of al-Azhar, which later on during the period of the fifteenth Imam became a site for the famous university of the same name.

Once the Fatimid dynasty was firmly established in Egypt, the name of Abbasid Caliph was dropped from the Khutbah in Friday sermons and replaced it with the ruling Fatimid Imam. From the city of Baghdad, Abbasid Caliphs claimed supreme political and spiritual authority in Islam, and from Cairo Fatimid Caliphs claimed the similar authority in Islam. This period has been a golden era in the history of the Ismailis. The Fatimid empire extended from Palestine to Tunisia and the Fatimid Imams ruled over North Africa, Egypt and Syria.

A split in the Fatimid dynasty

After having ruled Egypt for sixty years, Caliph al-Mustansir, the eighteenth Imam of the Fatimid Ismailis, died in 1094. After the death of al-Mustansir, his followers divided themselves into two branches. This split has been one of the major schisms in the history of Ismailis. The branch that accepted the Imamate of al-Mustansir's elder son Abu

Mansur Nizar became known as Nizari Ismailis (or Nizariyya). The other branch, which followed the younger son, al-Musta'li, became known as Musta'lian Ismailis (or Musta'liyya). The members of the latter branch, who are also known as Bohras in India, do not recognize Aga Khan as their spiritual leader or Imam. The leader of the Bohra community is called Da'i Mutlaq (Absolute Preacher). Bohras have Jama'at khanas for social and religious gatherings. The ritual prayers are recited in Bohra mosques.

Al-Musta'li became the next Fatimid Caliph with the help of his brother-in-law, al-Afdal bin Badr al-Jamali, who was the commander of the Fatimid army. Al-Afdal's army besieged Alexandria, imprisoned Nizar and his two sons, who had managed to escape from Cairo and settled in Alexandria. Historians have recorded that the prisoners were "immured" and died in prison. Ismaili legends have various versions of the escape of Imam Nizar's son Hadi and/or his wife from the prison of Alexandria. According to Ismaili versions, the escapee or escapees settled somewhere in Persia among the Assassins and later on moved to Alamut. Details of the escape from prison and settlement in Alamut are sketchy, and dates are unavailable.

1171 A.D. — End of the Fatimid dynasty

Musta'li, who was a political puppet in the hands of his Vizier, died in 1101. Twenty years later al-Afdal was assassinated. The Fatimid Dynasty of the Musta'lian Ismailis did not last for long. In 1171, Egypt was restored to the Sunni Tariqah by the great Kurdish Muslim soldier Salah ad-Din Yusuf al-Ayyubi (d. 1193), known as Saladin in the West. Historians have recorded that Saladin effectively and ruthlessly destroyed the mutinous Fatimid Army. The heretical books of the Fatimid Ismailis were heaped on bonfires and Ismaili jurists, who were mostly Hafizi Musta'lians, were replaced with Sunni Qadis (religious judges). The bidding-prayers (Adhans) were recited in the name of the 'Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad al-Mustadi. It was from Egypt, after the supplantation of the Fatimids, that Salah ad-Din began the conquest of Syria and founded the Ayyubi dynasty.

Emergence of the dreaded Assassins

Hasan bin Sabbah, the founder of the Assassins in Persia, was born into an Ithna'ashri family in the holy city of Qum about 1060 A.D. He was brought up in Rayy, near Tehran. Hasan's conversion to the Ismaili faith was largely due to his contact with an Ismaili Da'i named Amira Zarrab. Thereafter, he came in contact with several other Ismaili Da'is, such as, Abd-al-Malik ibn-Attash. Hasan went to Egypt to see Fatimid Imam al-Mustansir. It is not certain if he met al-Mustansir. Ismaili historians record that Hasan became an active supporter of Imam Nizar, the eldest son of al-Mustansir. Western scholars write that Hasan bin Sabbah went to Cairo in 1078 and shortly thereafter he was deported from Egypt to North Africa. There was no dispute over the succession between Nizar and Musta'li in that period. Al-Mustansir died nearly fifteen years later, in 1094.

On his way to North Africa, Hasan's ship met with an accident. Hasan was saved and taken to Syria. From there he traveled to Persia. Upon his return to Persia, he purchased (some historians say he seized) the impregnable fortress of Alamut (alhu-amut, i.e.,

eagle's nest) in the Alburz mountains in Persia. Alamut became his stronghold for revolt and a centre of operations. From here he expanded his power to other fortresses and over the tribes living in the mountainous regions far removed from Alamut. His network of Assassins stretched as far as Syria. Since the order for his banishment came from Vizier Badr al-Jamali, and Jamali's son al-Afdal had taken the side of Musta'li, Hasan bin Sabbah — a Fatimid Da'i and an Ismaili propagandist — took the side of Imam Nizar after the death of al-Mustansir.

Hasan bin Sabbah became known as “The Old Man of the Mountain” (Shaykh al-Jabal) of Persia and a Grand Master of the dreaded Assassins. It was their *modus operandi* that made the Assassins the most feared foe. Fida'iyyah (self-sacrificing Assassins) would infiltrate their enemies as trusted servants or teachers, in the guise of dervishes. After winning the trust of their masters, they would kill the selected leaders, including their masters, upon instructions from Alamut. The killing was mostly with a dagger, which became a symbol of their terror. Often a Fida'i would kill himself with the same dagger after accomplishing his mission. Even a powerful opponent of the Assassins would prefer to make a friendly treaty with them rather than risk his own life at the hands of a trusted servant who might turn out to be a fida'i.

The word Assassin comes from an Arabic term *hashshashin*, “consumers of hashish,” which, in Medieval Latin, became “Assassini.” There are narratives (by Marco Polo and others) that hashish was used as part of an indoctrination in order to produce the utmost obedience from the Assassins that were ultimately destined to become self-destructive disciples. There is an alternate story that refers to the sect's character as a “weaver of illusion,” again something that is produced under the influence of drugs.

Almost all western scholars have dismissed the story found in Ismaili history books about Hasan bin Sabbah being a schoolmate of the famous poet-astronomer Omar Khayyam and the great medieval politician Nizam al-Mulk. According to the myth perpetuated by the Nizari Ismaili “history” books, the three had made a pact that if any of them rose to a high position of power, he would help the others. The basis for the dismissal of this story by Western scholars is the age differences among the three protagonists.

From Hasan I to Hasan II

Hasan bin Sabbah (Hasan I) was a great thinker and a powerful propagandist, but he never claimed to be an Imam. He was the Hujja (the proof, a high position in the hierarchy of Ismailism) and a leader of the Da'wah. Hasan's emissaries (propagandists) went in all directions and a few undertook a hazardous journey to Syria carrying the “New Preaching” (*al-da'wa al-jadida*) of Nizariyya Ismailism to the old followers of the Fatimid Imams of Cairo.

Hasan bin Sabbah was a very strict disciplinarian. He killed his two sons for disobedience. From his deathbed in 1124, he appointed his lieutenant Da'i Kiya Buzurgummid as his successor. Kiya Buzurgummid, the second Grand Master of the

Assassins died in 1138. His son Da'i Muhammad became the next chief of the Assassins and of the Ismailis. Muhammad died in 1162. He was succeeded by his son Hasan, who is known as Hasan II. Two and half years after his accession, at midday on 8 August 1164, in the holy month of Ramadhan, Hasan II made a historical declaration. A brief text of the declaration appears in the previous chapter. (See Section Two, sub-heading; "Break your fast and rejoice")

Sinan a companion of Hasan II

After the proclamation, Hasan II sent his envoys in all directions to spread the message of Qiya'ma to the old followers of the Fatimid Imams. One such emissary who went to Syria was a crafty strategist named Sinan ibn Sulayman ibn Muhammad al-Basri, commonly known as Sinan Rashid al-Din. Sinan was brought up in Basra and studied with Hasan II in Alamut. He became the companion of Hasan and Alamut's chief Da'i in Syria.

Another version tells us that Hasan's father, Da'i Muhammad, was dissatisfied by his son's intentions and ideas, which ultimately led Hasan to declare the radical theory of Qiya'ma. Sinan being an active supporter of Hasan, Muhammad forced him to leave Alamut. Sinan spent time in Syria waiting for his friend Hasan II to become the Grand Master of Alamut.

Hasan II's son changes the family genealogy

Hasan II, the Bringer of the Resurrection, was stabbed on 9 January 1166 by his own brother-in-law, who opposed the Declaration. Hasan II's nineteen-year-old son, Muhammad II, became the new lord of Alamut. For the next forty-five years, Muhammad II expounded and propagated the Qiya'ma theory. Historians have recorded that this freedom from the Law, the open disregard for the Qur'anic ordinances, and the disrespect for the basic Islamic principles made Ismailis of Alamut Malahida, or heretics par excellence. The Assassins were openly despised and loathed by Sunni Muslims.

Hasan II had claimed, as some historians have recorded, a kind of "Spiritual Filiation" (esoteric descent) with the Imam that was hidden or dead. Muhammad II, who was a prolific writer, "changed the very genealogy of the family" and firmly established himself and his father as the physical descendants of Imam Nizar of the Fatimid dynasty.

Professor Marshall G. S. Hodgson (1922-68) wrote several books on the subject of the Assassins of Alamut and the struggle of the early Nizari Ismailis. Hodgson recorded in *The Order of Assassins* (Mouton, 1955, pp. 160-62):

He [Muhammad II] established Hasan [his dead father] as imam in the fullest sense, and not merely the representative of the imam; thus changing the very genealogy of the family.

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...Once Hasan, and therefore his son Muhammad, was endowed with an 'Alid genealogy, the breach with the time when there were only da'is in Alamut was complete, and the new dispensation inaugurated with all propriety.

Imam gives his pregnant wife to his Da'i

Dr. Farhad Daftary writes in *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 392):

According to the most widely popular version, a son born to Nizar's grandson or great-grandson, and who subsequently ruled as Hasan II, was exchanged with a son born at the same time to [Da'i] Muhammad b. Buzurg-Ummid, without the latter's knowledge. According to yet another version, a pregnant wife of Nizar's descendant at Alamut was given to Muhammad's care, and, in due course, gave birth to Hasan II. On the basis of the genealogy subsequently circulating amongst the Nizaris, there were three generations between Hasan II and Nizar, Hasan being represented as the son of al-Qahir b. al-Muhtadi b. al-Hadi b. Nizar.

Marshall G. S. Hodgson, after quoting a version similar to the above of "two babies, born at the same time and exchanged three days later by an old woman" added one more folklore on page 162 of *The Order of Assassins*: "The imam who lived at the foot of the hill committed adultery with Muhammad ibn Buzurg'ummid's wife....Muhammad found it out, and killed the imam...."

The quoted version of "a pregnant wife of Nizar's descendant at Alamut was given to Muhammad's care, and, in due course, gave birth" is recorded on page 253 of *Noorum-Mubin*. But, the version records that the son that was born to the pregnant wife of the Imam was named al-Qahir (not Hasan); and this child al-Qahir became the father of Hasan `ala dhikrihis-salam.

The Ismaili story becomes more complicated when *Noorum-Mubin* records that Da'i Muhammad's wife gave birth to a son at the same time that Imam al-Qahir's wife gave birth to her son. Both, newborn babies were named Hasan. Al-Qahir's son became Imam Hasan and Muhammad's son became Da'i Hasan.

The majority of historians claim there was only one Hasan, and that he was the son of Da'i Muhammad and later became Imam Hasan.

Astonishing historical comparison of "two Hasans"

Here is a brief summary of a historical comparison of "Two Hasans," which is to be found in the books of Ismaili history.

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1. Imam Hasan was born in 1126/1127.

Da'i Hasan was born in 1127.

2. Imam Hasan died in 1166.
Da'i Hasan died in 1166.
3. Imam Hasan's father, al-Qahir, died in 1162.
Da'i Hasan's father, Muhammad, died in 1162.
4. Imam Hasan's son was named ala- Muhammad.
Da'i Hasan's son was named Muhammad II.
5. Imam Hasan's son was born in 1147.
Da'i Hasan's son was born in 1147.

A chain of fabrication

In order to try and somehow maintain the myth of uninterrupted succession of their Imams the Nizaris, as we have shown, were obliged to resort to quite outrageous and far fetched distortions of what most trained and unbiased historians have recorded about the period in question.

The enormity of this deception will be better appreciated if we summarize the chain of these fabrications relating to the Alamut period.

1. It has been accepted by most historians dealing with this period that al-Mustansir's eldest son, Abu Mansur Nizar together with his two sons were imprisoned by Nizar's brother al-Musta'li who had usurped the Fatimid throne. It is also generally recognized by these historians that Nizar and his two sons perished in the prison.

But, Nizari historians insist that Nizar's son Hadi and/or his wife escaped from the prison although they adduce no evidence to substantiate this claim. Indeed, they are not even sure who out of them escaped nor are they able to confirm exactly how, when and where they escaped to or what happened to them over many decades.

2. By all known historical records, Hasan II was the son of Da'i Muhammad who had succeeded his father Da'i Kiya Buzurgummid to the Alamut throne. Moreover Hasan II also known as Hasan, `ala dhikrihis-salam for his Declaration of Qiya'ma, never himself during his lifetime made any claim to be an Imam. It seems most unlikely that a man who dared to make such a dangerous declaration, on behalf of or in the name of a dead or hidden Imam, would wholeheartedly welcome the added authority of him being an Imam and could get away with it by proclaiming it at the same time.

The fact that he did not claim to be an Imam therefore convincingly proves that neither he nor his supporter regarded Hasan II as Imam. The best he could do was to claim a corresponding authority to act on behalf of a dead or hidden Imam as his Hujjah, which claim happened to be deduced by some as esoteric filiation. Even then, within seventeen

months of his radical Proclamation, he was murdered by his own brother-in-law who happened to disagree with him.

3. It was his son Muhammad II, who in order to appropriate for himself the respected Fatimid genealogy, elaborated the doctrine of the Qiya'ma and posthumously declared his father a full fledged Imam. As his son and successor, he automatically became Imam himself. This of course had nothing to do with truth but with political power and gaining added authority to command his subjects. He being a prolific writer could conjure such a move and at the same time propagate it.

Muhammad II's deception of course very much suited the Nizari historians who were seeking uninterrupted succession of Imams from the Fatimid dynasty, provided they could substantiate Muhammad II's claim by any subterfuge.

4. In order to "prove" this direct descent from Nizar, there was no choice but to concoct the filmland scenario of two newly born sons being exchanged without Da'i Muhammad's knowledge or alternatively through another scenario where two sons, one of a Da'i and another of an Imam, conveniently born exactly at the same time and place happen to have the same name, Hasan.

5. The story becomes even more weird and complicated if one examines the claim made by Noorum-Mubin: "a pregnant wife of Nizar's descendant at Alamut was given to Da'i Muhammad's care, and, in due course gave birth" not to Hasan but to his father, al-Qahir. The convoluted scenario reaches its climax when Noorum-Mubin gives a further twist to this saga by alleging that al-Qahir, who was raised in the house of Da'i Muhammad, had a son named Hasan. It so happened that Da'i Muhammad's wife also gave birth to a son named Hasan. The drama does not end here. Noorum-Mubin records that after the death of al-Qahir and Da'i Muhammad, which also happens to be in the same year, both the Hasans had claimed Imamate but only the son of al-Qahir was the bona fide claimant.

Twenty-fifth Imam proclaims himself a Sunni Muslim

In 1210, Muhammad II, the prolific writer, died of poisoning. He was succeeded by his son Hasan III. In Ismaili history he is known as the twenty-fifth Imam Jalal al-Din Hasan. Hasan III made a complete turnabout from the teachings of his grandfather and circulated a letter announcing strict observance of the Islamic Shari'ah Laws by his followers. Sunni legislators were invited to Alamut to instruct Ismailis in the use of new mosques in the Ismaili villages.

Dr. Farhad Daftary writes in *The Isma'ilis* (p. 405):

Our Persian historians relate that upon his accession, Hasan [III] publicly repudiated the doctrine of the qiyama and proclaimed his adherence to Sunni Islam, ordering his followers to observe the Shari'a in its Sunni form.

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Historians have recorded that Hasan III's mother was a devout Sunni Muslim. He was very much attached to his mother, and that could be the reason for a change of heart. His conversion was accepted by the 'Abbasid Caliph an-Nasir (1180-1225) and he was surnamed Naw- Musalman (Neo-Muslim). Later on, Hasan III married a sister of the Caliph's governor of Gilan. Ismaili historians have recorded the above changes but they stop short of admitting that their twenty-fifth Imam had embraced the Sunni Tariqah of Islam.

Twenty-sixth Imam slaughtered by his homosexual lover

Hasan III died of dysentery in 1221 and was succeeded by a child of nine named Ala al-Din, Muhammad III. This twenty-sixth Imam of the Ismailis is depicted by historians as a "sickly and unbalanced corrupt figure." Muhammad III was murdered in 1255.

In 1987, a book examining the history of the Assassins was published in Great Britain by the Aquarian Press. It is entitled *The Assassins — Holy Killers of Islam*. Author Edward Burman of the University of Leeds writes (p. 86):

Muhammad was murdered by Hasan Mazandari, who had once been his lover and who had received one of the Master's concubines as his wife. Thus the penultimate Grand Master of the Persian Assassins died ignominiously, slaughtered with an axe by the hand of a former homosexual lover.

Twenty-seventh Imam and his followers massacred

Ala-uddin Muhammad was succeeded by his son Ruknu'd-din Khurshah, "the last Khudawand of Alamut." In 1256, Ruknu'd-din surrendered to the Mongols and within a period of one year all the fortresses and strongholds of the Assassins were razed to the ground. A Brief History of Ismailism records that 80,000 Ismailis were killed by the Mongolian soldiers of Hulegu Khan. Noorum-Mubin records that even babies that were sleeping in their cradles were killed in the massacre. In the words of professor Bernard Lewis in *The Assassins* (p. 95), historian Ata Malik Juvayni (1226-83) writes:

'He [Ruknuddin] and his followers were kicked to a pulp and then put to the sword; and of him and his stock no trace was left, and he and his kindred became but a tale on men's lips and a tradition in the world.'

This was yet another historical evidence which the Nizari Ismaili historians who were bent upon demonstrating unbroken succession had somehow to explain away. At present there remains nothing of Alamut and all other strongholds of the Assassins of Persia, "except heaps of loose stone," writes Professor W. Ivanow in *Alamut and Lamasar*.

Associating others with Allah

**It will be said (to them):
"Call upon your `partners' (for help)":**

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**they will call upon them,
but they will not listen to them;
and they will see the penalty (before them);
(How they will wish)
`If only they had been open to guidance!'
Holy Qur'an 28/64**

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8

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CONVERSION OF SYRIAN ASSASSINS

Persian Assassins extend activities to Syria

In the beginning of the twelfth century, Syria was in an unstable condition. Several religious groups were active within the country. The Crusaders were trying to establish the roots of Christianity; Druse, Nusayris, Fatimids, and other Shi'ite "heretics" were also securing their footholds; the rebellions were trying to break the power of the dominant Sunni Saljuqs who already had their strongholds in Syria. At this time in history, the Persian Assassins extended their activities into Syria. Leaders of the Syrian Assassins who were trying to build their own empire and undermine the power of the Saljuqs came from Alamut or were Persians acting under the guidance of Persian Assassins.

Sinan Rashid al-Din, the chief Da'i of Alamut and a companion of Hasan 'ala dhikrihis-salam, introduced his friend's doctrine of Qiya'ma to the Syrian Ismailis who were followers of the old Fatimid Imams. But the Qiya'ma doctrine was not accepted in Syria as well as it had been in Persia. After the death of Hasan II, his son Muhammad II developed an enmity with Sinan. Muhammad sent fida'is from Alamut to kill Sinan. The attempts failed and the Syrian branch of the Assassins separated from their Persian counterparts. Sinan became the Grand Master of the Syrian Assassins. Marco Polo has referred to as "The Old Man of the Mountain" of Syria.

Sinan accepted as Imam by the Syrian Assassins

Below are three extracts from the works of three authors on the subject. Their sources of information are separate and disclosed by the authors.

1. Edward Burman in his book *The Assassins: Holy Killers of Islam*, writes on the subject of Sinan and the Qiyama, quoting several sources (pp. 113-14):

The position of Sinan with regard to Alamut was ambiguous. Although nominally subject to the decisions at Alamut, he was in fact an independent ruler in Syria for thirty years. It seems that he exercised this independence in such a way as to cause ill-feeling with the Grand Masters of Alamut, who on at least two occasions are supposed to have sent Assassins from Persia to kill him.

Yet Sinan had first been sent to Syria by the Masters at Alamut, and had maintained a close personal relationship with Hasan II. After the resurrection announced by Hasan in Alamut and other Persian strongholds, the ceremony of breaking the Ramadan fast was also carried out in Syria. The biographer of Sinan reports in language which echoes that used to describe events in Persia after the declaration of Hasan that 'he allowed

them [i.e., the companions] to defile their mothers and sisters and daughters and released them from the fast of the feast of Ramadan, and they called themselves Sincere'. There is evidence, however, that Sinan over-stepped his loyalty, either from his own volition or in meeting the demands of his followers, in being accepted as an imam or direct representative of God.

Some of his own thoughts on the matter have been preserved in a brief but remarkable fragment published in the nineteenth century in French translation by Guyard. After reviewing the six previous ages from creation of the world to the present he proclaims himself as supreme and divine leader, not only the latest prophet in the series but the incarnation of God himself.

Note: The author refers to the French translation by Stanislas Guyard entitled *Fragments Relatifs a la Doctrine des Ismaelites* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1874, p. 100).

2. Farhad Daftary writes in *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (p. 401):

Sinan enjoyed unprecedented popularity in the Syrian Nizari community, which enabled him to drift away from the central headquarters of the movement in Alamut. But it is not known just what role he claimed for himself. Some sources relate that he was venerated as the imam, at least by some of his followers who were called Sinanis after him. In the popular Syrian Nizari literature of later times he is exalted as a saintly hero with a cosmic rank appropriate to the imam himself; a rank much higher than that accorded to any representative of the imam. Indeed, Abu Firas ascribes the glory of Sinan's achievement directly to God, as if he received divine protection and guidance.

3. Bernard Lewis writes in *The Assassins* (1985, p. 111):

'In the year 572 [1176-77], says Kamal al-Din, 'the people of the Jabal al-Summaq gave way to iniquity and debauchery, and called themselves "the Pure." Men and women mingled in drinking sessions, no man abstained from his sister or daughter, the women wore men's clothes, and one of them declared that Sinan was his God.'

Note: The author's source is Kamal al-Din, Zubda. (Ms. Paris, Arabe 1666, fol. 193b ff.)

Downfall of Assassins in Persia and Syria

Within a century of the historical declaration of Qiyama came the extinction of the Assassins in Persia and the downfall of the Assassins in Syria. In 1256, the soldiers of the Mongolian army led by Hulegu Khan destroyed the impregnable forts of Alamut and its

enclaves, and massacred almost all the Assassins in Persia. In 1273, the castles of Syrian Assassins fell to Mamluk Sultan Baybars I, and the Nizari Ismailis lost their political power in Syria.

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Bernard Lewis records in Assassins (p. 121): "The end of the power of the Assassins came under the double assault of the Mongols and of the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, Baybars." Continuing further, he records (p. 122):

The Assassins, weakened in Syria and disheartened by the fate of their Persian brothers, were in no position to resist. Meekly accepting this measure, they themselves paid tribute to Baybars, and soon it was he [the Mamluk Sultan], in place of the fallen lord of Alamut, who appointed and dismissed them [chiefs of Syrian Assassins] at will.

And, on page 123: "Ismailism stagnated as a minor heresy in Persia and Syria, with little or no political importance."

Syrian Assassins offer to ally with Crusaders

Cyril Glasse has traveled extensively in the Islamic world. Under the heading "Ismailis," he writes in the Concise Encyclopedia of Islam (Harper and Row, 1989, p. 198):

In 654/1256 the Assassin stronghold of Alamut fell to the Mongols and shortly thereafter the last Grand Master, Rukn ad-Din, was put to death.... Before the Mamluks stamped out Ismaili power in Syria, the Ismailis there had offered to ally themselves with the Crusaders and to become Christians. The offer was enthusiastically received by the Christian King of Jerusalem and his court, but nullified by the Knights Templar, who put the Ismaili envoys to death.

This offer to ally with the Crusaders reminds me of Aga Khan III's alliance with British imperialism in India and with Zionism in the early part of the present century. During the recent occupation of Afghanistan by the Russians, Agakhani Ismailis living in the valley of Kayan did not join the forces of Muslim Mujahideen to fight the invaders. Instead, the followers of Karim Aga Khan fought against the holy warriors who were obliged to pass through their territories. Aga Khan's Mukhi and the military governor, Sayed Jaffar Nadri, proudly declared before the British media that his army had killed, captured, and imprisoned Afghan Mujahideen. The details were televised on Channel 4 of British Television and published in London's Sunday Magazine of 21 May 1989.

Second "Dawr-i Satr" and a split among Assassins

Shortly after the massacre of Ismailis in Persia, the twenty-seventh Imam of the Nizari Ismailis was killed by the Mongols. With that the Ismaili Empire in Alamut came to an end. However, Ismaili historians claim that a young son of the Imam, who was named Muhammad, survived and became the next Imam at the age of seven or eight. Posing as a

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Dervish (mystic) and a Zardozi (an embroiderer) this twenty-eighth Imam, Muhammad, lived the rest of his life in complete concealment, somewhere in the mountainous area west of the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan. This was the beginning of the second major Dawr-i Satr (period of hidden Imams). Strange though it may sound, Noorumi-Mubini records (p. 309) that individual who was originally named Muhammad became known as Shams because he was as handsome as the sun (Shams). Ismailis now call their twenty-eighth Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad.

This Muhammad, alias Shams, died in 1310. Shortly thereafter, the community of Assassins split into two branches. Ismaili historians record that two out of the three sons of the deceased claimed the Imamate. The majority of the Syrian Assassins and a few Persian Assassins chose to follow the eldest son, Mu'min Shah, and became known as the "Muhammad Shahi" branch of Nizari Ismailis. The rest of the Persian Assassins accepted Mu'min Shah's younger brother, Qasim Shah, as their Imam, and the branch became known as the "Qasim-Shahi" branch of the Nizari Ismailis. The Aga Khans claimed their descent from Qasim Shah.

Agakhani Ismaili historians claim that Qasim Shah was a son of their twenty-eighth Imam, Shamsuddin Muhammad. Others have claimed that Qasim Shah was a grandson of Shamsuddin Muhammad and a son of Mu'min Shah.

One generation omitted altogether from the genealogy

Dr. Farhad Daftary, who has gone through various sources and documents over a period of twenty years, has recorded the following facts based upon several sources (The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines, 1990, pp. 447- 48):

...Muhammad Shah and Qasim Shah were in fact brothers, both being the sons of Mu'min Shah. And on their father's death, each of the two sons claimed his succession. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the earliest extant Qasim-Shahi Nizari sources also name Mu'min Shah as the son and successor of Shams al-Din Muhammad. According to these sources, Mu'min Shah was in turn succeeded by his son Qasim Shah. But Mu'min Shah's name is omitted altogether from the later Qasim-Shahi lists of their imams as well as from the list currently accepted by the Agha Khan's Nizari followers. Thus, it is not clear whether Muhammad Shah and Qasim Shah were the sons of Mu'min Shah, or whether Mu'min Shah b. Shams al-Din was himself the elder brother of Qasim Shah. Be it as it may be, Mu'min Shah b. Shams al-Din, who died around 738/1337-1338, was the father of Muhammad Shah, who soon after Shams al-Din's death led a faction of the Nizari community in rivalry with his paternal uncle (or brother) Qasim Shah. This split in the family of the imams did subdivide the Nizaris into two branches. The Muhammad-Shahi Imams, possibly representing the elder of the two lines, initially seem to have acquired a greater number of followers than the Qasim-Shahi Imams. Almost the entire community in Syria as well as large numbers in Persia, especially in Daylam, and in Badakhshan, upheld the Muhammad-Shahi cause for some time. In India, where Shah Tahir and his successors, the final ten imams of the Muhammad-Shahi line, resided, this Nizari sub-sect had a significant following.

Traces of Nizari Imams disappear from 1480 to 1722 a.d.

Edward Burman writes in *The Assassins: Holy Killers of Islam* (pp. 175-76):

From 1480, in fact, all traces of the hidden imams disappear for about three centuries until they appear again slightly further to the south with the death of Shah Nizar at Kahak, south of Qom, in 1722. Then from Kahak they seem to have moved much further south east to Kerman. A plausible hypothesis in this case would be that an Isma'ili imam of the time gave his support to the tribal leader Karim Khan Zand — whose name the present Aga Khan bears — when he rose against the decaying Safavid dynasty in mid-century. It was in fact towards the end of the eighteenth century that the history of the line again becomes clearly discernible, when the Nizari Isma'ili imams appear already established as important members of the Persian nobility. The presumed forty-fourth imam, Abu al Hasan Ali Shah, in fact became Governor of the city of Kerman under Karim Khan Zand and died in that city in 1780.

If the recorded history during the Alamut and post Alamut period, is full of so many unauthenticated and outrageous claims relating to Imam's true succession, how much more improbable would it be to accept the claim of uninterrupted succession through three centuries from 1480 to 1722, during which time “all traces of the hidden imams” totally disappear?

Reappear on the pages of history

Professor Bernard Lewis writes in *The Assassins* (pp. 123-24):

They [Syrian Assassins] do not reappear on the pages of history until the early nineteenth century, when they are reported in normal conflict with their rulers, their neighbors and one another. From the mid-century they settled down as a peaceful rural population, with their centre at Salamiyya, a new settlement reclaimed by them from the desert. At the present time they number some 50,000, of whom some, but not all, have accepted the Aga Khan as their Imam.

“A succession of disasters”

Dick Douwes and Norman N. Lewis write in their book *The Trials of Syrian Isma'ilis in the First Decade of the 20th Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 216):

The [Syrian] Isma'ilis had suffered a succession of disasters in the first half of the 19th century. In 1808, Misyaf was wrested from them...in 1816, soldiers serving Mustafa Agha Barbar, the Governor of Tripoli, ravaged a number of their villages....The army of Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt spread destruction widely through the mountains in the 1830s. In succeeding decades, the Isma'ili peasantry suffered from heavy taxation....

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In 1853, Reverend Samuel Lyde visited the territory of Syrian Ismailis. An extract from his book *The Ansyreeh and the Ismaeleeh* (London, 1853, p. 235) is quoted by Douwes and Lewis on p.216: "...they [Syrian Ismailis] gave the idea of a lost and corrupt people, of whom all would soon disappear but the name."

Syrian Assassins discover an Imam in India

The foundation of Nizariyya Ismailism is based upon the perpetual leadership of a living Imam that is present (Hazar) to give guidance to his followers from time to time. No person can act as a Hazar Imam unless he is a son of the previous Imam and has been so designated (Nass) by his father. The physical link must continue without any interruption and join 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first Imam. A community of Imami Nizari Ismailis cannot survive in its true sense if it fails to establish contact with their infallible Imam, the spiritual father and mother of the Murids (followers).

As recorded by Edward Burman and mentioned earlier at length, "from 1480, in fact, all traces of the hidden imams disappear for about three centuries." The Ismailis of Syria were desperately looking for an Imam to lead their community. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Syrian followers of Imam Mu'min Shah (Muhammad Shahi Ismailis) had lost contact with their fortieth Imam, Amir Muhammad al-Baqir, who had been living in India. According to Ismaili historian `Arif Tamir, the last messages received by the Syrians from their Mu'min Shahi Imam were in 1795 or 1796.

Quoting sources, Dick Douwes and Norman Lewis record (p. 217):

During the dark days of the Syrian Isma'ilis in the first half of the 19th century, they had little contact with the outside world and knew nothing about their Imam; it was symptomatic of their revival in the second half of the century that they then made efforts to rediscover him. One Syrian sheikh went out to Iran or India in 1881, and three others, in 1883. The latter group learned that an Isma'ili Imam was living in Bombay, and in 1887 or 1888, another delegation of Syrian sheiks actually met Sultan Muhammad Shah, the third Aga Khan, in Bombay. He was then ten or eleven years old.

Upon their return home, the group invited all the Syrian Ismaili Sheiks and informed them of their meeting with the Aga Khan. A small group of the Syrian Ismailis called Hajjawis accepted Aga Khan's claim to the Imamate and became his followers. In the past the majority of Syrian Ismailis had rejected Qasim Shah's claim to the Imamate. Since Aga Khan was claiming his descent from Qasim Shah, the larger group, which was more powerful and known as Suwaydanis, rejected Aga Khan's claim, record Douwes and Lewis.

Syrian Jama`at asked to recite Salah five times

In 1890, two years after the meeting described above, Aga Khan wrote a letter to his Syrian followers appointing Sheikh Sulayman al-Hajj as the Mukhi and Emir Ismail ibn

Muhammad as the Kamadia for his Syrian Jama`at. Mukhi is a term used for the chief of the Jama`at. His duties are to conduct the religious ceremonies in the Jama`at khanas as a representative of the Imam and collect Zakat, Khums, and other donations, and transmits the collected funds to the Imam. Kamadia is an accountant who assists the Mukhi in his duties.

In the archives of the Ismailia Council in Salamiyya, Syria, there is a letter bearing the seal of Aga Khan, written in 1307 a.h. (1890 a.d.), in which Aga Khan instructed his Syrian Jama`at to recite Salah five times a day, observe fasting during the month of Ramadhan, make the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), and pay Zakat and Khums.

1895 A.D. — Syrian Jama`at asked to recite Gujrati Du'a

Dick Douwes and Norman N. Lewis write in *The Trial of Syrian Ismailis* (p. 218):

Sheikh Sulayman died about 1895 in India; his companion there, Sheikh Ahmad al-Muhammad al-Hajj, was designated the new mukhi. Before returning to Syria, he was instructed in the doctrines and rituals of the Aga Khanis (or Khojas) and was told to introduce them in Syria. They were completely different from those set out in the letter of 1890. Some of the main innovations concerned the salat, or ritual prayer: the Isma`ilis were now bidden to meet for prayer only twice a day, around a table on which a portrait of the Imam was placed and towards which the worshippers were to turn, instead of in the direction of Mecca. Many of the prayers were to be said in Urdu. Among the formulae to be pronounced were the words, “‘Ali Allah, sahih Allah” (‘Ali is God, truly God).

Sheikh Ahmad returned from Bombay about 1895 and introduced the form of worship that was practiced by the Khojah Ismailis of India. One can imagine the plight of Arabs reciting their daily prayers in Gujrati. I have been told that the Khojah Ismailis who had visited the Jama`at khanas in Salamiyya were shocked and dismayed to hear the inane pronunciation of their Arab brothers reciting prayers in Gujrati. The Syrian Jama`at made repeated petitions to Aga Khan III to change the language of their prayers. Finally, sixty years later, in 1956, the Gujrati Du'a was replaced with an Arabic Du'a (not an Arabic Salah).

1920 A.D. — Nusayris attack Ismailis

When the First World War ended, Syrian Ismailis expected a change in their plight but the worst was yet to come. Moustapha Ghaleb a Syrian Ismaili scholar writes in *The Ismailis of Syria* (pp. 166-67):

When the First World War came to its end, the Ismailis began to feel rest, and expect some good change in their own situation. But -unfortunately- the Ismailis of the Western mountains in Qadmous, Misyaf, and Khawabi, were liable to the raids of the Nusseirys in the year 1919 a.d. Their cattles [sic] were robbed, their houses were burned.

...On the 12th of March 1920 Nusseirys bands, led this time by (Sheikh Saleh El- Ali) attacked the town of Qadmous, and laid siege [sic] on it for some days. When the defenders consumed all their materials of provision and defense, they were obliged to surrender. Then the Nussairys bands had a free hand in spoiling, rubbing [sic], and killing. The Ismailis women and children, left the town bared-foot, and semi-naked, going towards Salamiah.

Places of worship

**“And the places of worship are for Allah (alone):
So invoke not anyone along with Allah.” Holy Qur'an 72/18**

Commentary by A.Yusuf Ali:

(1) No place of worship whatever should be used for the worship of any other but the true God. The Ka`bah was then full of idols, but the idols and their votaries were usurpers.

(2) Worship should not be mixed up with vain objects but should be reserved for the sincere service of God.

(3) All our gifts are for God's service, which includes the service of His creatures, and not for our vainglory.

Ismailism as a Sect of Islam

Shi'ahs and Sunnis

In 632 a.d., the great Prophet of Islam departed from this world. Before his departure, he successfully united the warring desert Arabs under the banner of Islam. He left the Islamic Ummah (Muslim Brotherhood) as one united body. There were no sects or factions in Islam. It was the unflinching loyalty to Islam and the strength of unity that made it possible for the succeeding two Caliphs to expand the Islamic Empire with miraculous speed.

After the demise of the second Caliph, the split in the Islamic Brotherhood began to appear in the political arena. The third Caliph was assassinated in 656 and `Ali ibn Abi Talib was appointed as the fourth Caliph. It was a time of unrest and political power struggle. During the Caliphate of `Ali, Muslims fought against their own brothers on the battlefield. Those who took the side of `Ali separated from the mainstream of the Islamic Brotherhood. Some historians write that this happened many years after the death of `Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Today, between 10 and 12 percent of the Islamic Brotherhood maintain that `Ali ibn Abi Talib had the exclusive right to succeed his father-in-law, the Prophet Muhammad (upon

on whom be peace), by a divine mandate. The divine authority to lead the Ummah as Imam (spiritual leader) was then redesignated (Nass) to the descendants of `Ali. The party that supported these beliefs became known as Shi`ahtul `Ali (the party of `Ali), or, in short, Shi`ah (literally, the party or faction). The second major group, comprising nearly 85 percent of the Ummah, consider `Ali to be the fourth in the line of succession as Caliph. They became known as "Sunnis" (the people of the [Prophet's] tradition).

'Abdullah ibn Saba'

Dr. John Norman Hollister writes in *The Shi`a Of India* (p. 15), supported by R. A. Nicholson's work *A literary History of the Arabs* (pp. 215-16) and W. Muir's work *The Caliphate, Its Rise, Decline and Fall* (pp. 225-26):

The earliest explicit propaganda in his ['Ali's] favour is connected with `Abdullah ibn Saba'. He was a native of San'a in Yemen, and a Jew. During the Khilafat of 'Uthman he became a Muslim and traveled widely preaching the return of Muhammad, while meantime, his wasi or executor, was present, as had been true for every prophet. He opened a campaign on behalf of 'Ali suggesting that Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman were usurpers, since the divine spirit which had dwelt in Muhammad had passed to 'Ali. His travels took him to Hejaz, Basra, Kufa, Syria and Egypt. Muir says that he was expelled from Basra, Kufa and Syria. Disappointed by 'Uthman, he became an earnest advocate for his overthrow. To this program the malcontents responded.

Some Sunni scholars have postulated that 'Abdullah ibn Saba', a Jew, joined Islam with the intent of creating factions within the Muslim Brotherhood. He introduced a concept that raised the status of 'Ali, which led to schism in Islam and the foundation of the Shi`i Ghulat. Farhad Daftary writes in *The Ismailis* (p. 64): "Ibn Saba' is also alleged to have preached `Ali's divinity, which would qualify him more readily as a ghali." (Ghali means extremist. Ghulat is plural of ghali.)

Ibn Saba' and the Apostle Paul

A comparison of the preaching of `Abdullah ibn Saba' for `Ali with that of Apostle Paul for Jesus Christ shows significant similarities. Paul was originally a Jew like Ibn Saba'. He was converted to Christianity by a vision while on the road to Damascus. Paul was not among "the twelve" nor a replacement for disloyal Judas.

By giving a new dimension to the Law of Moses, Paul liberated Christians from the observance of the Commandments that were prescribed in the Old Testament. He pronounced the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus, which is known as "Pauline Justification." `Abdullah ibn Saba' opened a similar campaign on behalf of `Ali ibn Talib. Both Paul and Saba' traveled widely, advocating their precepts. Like Saba', Paul was also expelled from many cities.

Scholars have speculated that Paul, who had been zealous in persecuting Christians, could have contrived the narrative of his dialogue with the resurrected Jesus Christ while on the road to Damascus in order to become a self-appointed Apostle. His intentions could have been to distort the original teachings of Jesus Christ and mislead his followers. During his lifetime Jesus had never pronounced self-veneration. Apostle Peter in his letters strongly encouraged Christians to exert themselves and to cling to the prophetic word. He issued powerful warnings against apostasy and false teachers who will introduce destructive heresies. The Christianity revolutionized by Paul is often called by these scholars "Pauline Christianity." Likewise, scholars have also alleged that the origin of attributing divinity to or exaggerated devotion for `Ali has its root in the early propagation by ibn Saba', who was also a converted Jew.

Ghadir al-Khumm

During the final days of his life, upon his return from the final "Farewell Pilgrimage" at Ghadir al-Khumm, on 15 March 632, Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace) delivered a historical message to his congregation. He asked those present, specific questions about his role as a messenger of Allah, and after hearing their response in affirmation, he gave them the final message. One of the guidelines, according to the legend, was to hold fast and never to be separated till the day of Resurrection from the two things that he was leaving behind.

The Sunni version of the legend is that the Prophet had instructed Muslims to hold fast to the Holy Qur'an and his Sunnah (traditions). The Shi'ah Muslims profess that the Prophet had asked Muslims to hold fast to 'itrat (posterity) along with the Qur'an. The Shi'ah Muslims also claim that at Ghadir al-Khumm, the Prophet declared, while raising the hand of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, "Whosoever has me as his Mawla (master) has 'Ali as his Mawla." In some versions the details and the wording of the declarations are elaborated further. Hence, this distinctive declaration gave the necessary mandate to 'Ali and his designated successors to lead the Islamic Ummah as an Imam. The celebration of `Id al-Ghadir as a Shi'ah festival was instituted centuries later, by Mu'izz ad-Dawlah, the Buyid ruler, in 962.

The New Encyclopedia of Islam, Volume 2, while quoting Ibn Kathir, explains that during the expedition to Yemen led by `Ali in 631 a.d., `Ali was very strict concerning the distribution of the spoils of war. `Ali was accused of misusing authority. The Prophet's statement was intended to "put an end to the murmuring against Ali." In the bibliography, the encyclopedia notes several sources of discourse according to Ibn Kathir.

Whichever of the above two versions one may choose to accept is his or her prerogative, but attributing divinity to `Ali, calling him "Mazhar of Allah" or "Sahi Allah" is definitely stepping outside of the realm of the pronouncements made at Ghadir al-Khumm. In the old, old Gujrati Du'a, which Ismailis used to recite when I was about ten years old, phrase "Ali - Muhammad" was defined as "Yak Khudah" meaning, "One God."

Three major sub-sects of Shi`ahs

Shi`ahs kept on sub-dividing into sub-sects. Whenever there was more than one claimant to succession of the Imamate, a split occurred. The three major divisions are identified below. However, there are several sub- divisions within these three primary groups.

1. The largest sub-sect of Shi`ahs is called "Ithna'ashriyya" or "Twelvers." It is the official religion of Iran. Also, a large majority of Iraq's population follow the "Twelve-Imam Shi`ism." In 873, the eleventh Imam of the Ithna'ashries died. The succeeding Imam, named Muhammad, whose age is disputed, disappeared into the cellar (a sort of well or pit) of his family home in Samarra. The hidden twelfth Imam, Muhammad, is known as "the awaited Mahdi" (al-Mahdi, al-Muntazar); "the eternal Imam" (al-Qaim); "Master of the Age" (Sahib ul-Zaman); as well as "Hidden-Imam" (al- Ghayab Imam).

For a period of nearly seventy years, which is known as Ghaiba Sughra (lesser concealment), the Hidden Imam was represented by four successive intermediators (Vakils), one after another. The last Vakil, `Ali ibn Muhammad, declined to name his successor, saying "The matter now rests with Allah and the Sahib az-Zaman (the hidden Imam)." Sahib az- Zaman is also called "Hazar Imam" by the Khojah Ithna'ashries. Before the end of the world, the awaited Mahdi will appear from "lesser occultation" to "greater occultation."

On the other hand, another sect known as Ja'fariya insist that the eleventh Imam had no son. According to Dr. Hollister this view is shared by some heresiographers. Syed Ameer Ali records that Ithna'ashries are divided into two sub-sects — Usulis and Akhbaris (i.e., the followers of principles and the followers of traditions). They differ on the amount of authority to be attached to the exposition of Mujtahids, who call themselves the representatives of the Imam.

2. The second sub-sect of Shi`ahs is called "Zaydis" or "Fivers." Their major concentration is in Yemen (forty percent of the population) and they believe in "Five-Imam Shi`ism." This group recognizes Imam Zayd, the grandson of Imam Husayn, to be the fifth Imam instead of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, who is the recognized Imam for the rest of Shi`ah community. Imam Zayd was the brother of Imam Baqir. Imam Zayd believed in secular power (Khilafat) and use of force as vital elements to claim Imamate. On the other hand, his brother Imam Muhammad al-Baqir did not involve himself in secular matters and disagreed with the views of his brother. Zayd was killed in 740 while leading a rebellion near Kufa. He was succeeded by his son Yahya, who was also killed in a similar venture. Zahidiyas have for many centuries ruled a small kingdom in Yemen.

3. The third sub-sect of Shi`ahs is called "Ismailis."

Edward G. Brown writes in A Literary History of Persia (Volume 1, pp.407-8):

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The chief thing which it derived from Isma'il the seventh Imam was its name Isma'ili; but it bore several other names, such as Sab'i ("the Sect of the Seven"), Batini ("the Esoteric Sect"); Ta'limi ("doctrinaire"), because, according to its tenets, the true "teaching" or "doctrine" (ta'lim) could only be obtained from the Imam of the time; Fatimi ("owing allegiance to the descendants of Fatima," the Prophet's daughter and `Ali's wife); Qirmati or Carmathian, after the da'i Hamdan Qarmat already mentioned. By their foes, especially in Persia, they were very commonly called simply Malahida ("impious heretics"), and later, after the New Propaganda of Hasan-i-Sabbah (of whom we shall speak in a later chapter), Hashishi ("hashish-eaters").

Today, because of its greater influence, in the western media as well as in many encyclopedias the term "Ismailis" is used exclusively for the followers of the Aga Khan. However, there are other branches of Ismailis who do not recognize Aga Khan as their spiritual leader, such as Musta'lians, Druzes, and Qarmatians.

1975 A.D. — Karim Aga Khan becomes "Mazhar of God"

In the early seventies, animosity developed on the issue of fundamental beliefs, between the Ismaili leaders in non-Islamic states (e.g., Canada, Kenya, Uganda) and those living in Islamic states. With the aim of resolving the discord, an international conference of heads of Ismailia Associations and Ismaili scholars was held under the chairmanship of Karim Aga Khan in Paris in March 1975.

The Ismailia Association for Pakistan, with the aim of coordinating Islamic and Ismaili beliefs, tabled a paper entitled "Fundamental Beliefs of Ismailis." The conference decided that "there was no need for such a statement"; hence the paper was not adopted. However, the conference did define some of the fundamental beliefs of Ismailis. The report of the conference was published in Nairobi on 5 May 1975 by Eqbal Rupani, a coordinator for the Ismailia Association Central Co-ordination Office. The defined concept of "Imamah" reads (p. 6):

The Imam to be explained as 'mazhar' of God, and the relationship between God and the Imam to be related to varying levels of inspiration and communication from God to man.

Notes:

1. The Arabic word mazhar means "copy" or "manifest." Hence "mazhar of God" would mean "copy of God" or "manifest, manifestation of God."
2. `Abd Allah ibn Maymun al-Qaddah, the alleged founder of Ismaili faith and the progenitor of the Fatimid Imams, who was greatly influenced by Mani, declared "that God is not separate from His manifestations," records Syed Ameer Ali in *The Spirit of Islam* (p. 332).

“Mazhar of God” became the official definition and concept for students' syllabuses, etc. The concept was totally un-Islamic. The outnumbered delegates from Pakistan knew that these kinds of un-Islamic teaching and preaching would create insurmountable problems for their Jama`ats, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan, which they did.

1982 A.D. — Nearly sixty Ismailis killed in Chitral

More than seventy-five percent of the Agakhani Ismailis live in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and near its northern frontier. The preamble of Pakistan's Constitution defines the main principles on which the constitution is based. Besides other objectives and principles, the definition reads:

Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accord with the teaching and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunna.

In 1974, Ahmediyyas (Qaddiyyanis) were declared non-Muslims by the National Assembly of Pakistan, because they had equated their leader Mirza Gulam Ahmed with Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace. A few years later, especially in Northern Pakistan, a movement to examine the teachings of Agakhani Ismailis began to take shape. Equating their leader with Allah, by the followers, was the issue at hand. If proven, it was far worse than equating someone with a Prophet of Allah.

Professor Bruce Borthwick of Albion College, Michigan, wrote an article called “The Ismailis and Islamization in Pakistan.” Some of the information in Borthwick's article came from a dissertation by an Ismaili scholar, Diamond Rattansi. Mr. Rattansi had visited Pakistan on several occasions to do research on the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation, Islamization and the Khojah Ismaili Community in Pakistan. Professor Borthwick writes (p. 9):

In 1982 a group of Sunnis in the northern area of Chitral, provoked and led by some ulama, chanting “Ismailis are kafirs [non-believers],” attacked and burnt an Ismaili centre, consisting of a jama`at khanah, hostel, and social services unit. Up to sixty Ismailis were reported to have been killed. Prior to this attack, a pamphlet signed by several ulama was circulated saying that the “Agha Khanis” were a threat to Pakistan and Islam. It alleged that they were trying to lure other Muslims to their tariqah through material rewards, namely the economical and social development projects of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program....

In 1983 and 84, a student branch of the Jama`at-i-Islami circulated an open letter to the Agha Khan asking him to declare:

Whether he was a Muslim and had the right to forgive the sins of his followers;

Whether the Ginans were equal in authority to the Koran; Whether he had exempted Ismailis from performing the Hajj and other rituals;
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Why jama`at khanahs were closed to non- Ismailis; and Why the Ismailis observed so much secrecy.

It was widely circulated among Muslims in general and among Ismailis, some copies being affixed to the walls of jama`at khanahs.

1990 — Justice Syed Abdur Rahman's judgment

In 1986, a group of Agakhani Ismailis was prevented by members of the Ismaili Volunteer Corps from reciting Adhan (a call to prayer) and the Islamic Ritual Prayers (Ar. Salat, Pr. Namaz), in one of the Jama`at khanas of Karachi. The group members wanted to fulfill the revealed Commands of Allah requiring every Muslim, Shi`ah as well as Sunni, to recite their Salah (prayers) every day, collectively with the Jama`at or individually. Following the incident, a formal complaint was filed at a local police station against the group members.

Consequently, the leaders of the group filed Civil Suit No. 331 of 1986 in the High Court of Sind at Karachi, against the President and Secretary of the Ismailia Council. The duties and activities of the Ismaili Volunteer Corps are governed by the Aga Khan's Ismailia Councils. The plaintiffs sought a court order to restore their rights as Ismaili Muslims to recite Adhan and Namaz, individually and/or collectively, in the Jama`at khanas of Karachi, which are specifically built for reciting prayers.

The President and Secretary of the Ismailia Council defended the case on the grounds that "inherent right of devolution of ownership of Jamatkhanas [is] in the Imam [Aga Khan]... Jamatkhanas are not dedicated as Masjids... [they are] additional places for religious practices, other than Masjids, for supererogatory prayers."

From time to time, the local media has been reporting the proceedings of this civil suit, which has yet to be decided. The publicity generated through the media has aroused great interest among Pakistani Muslims who have been curious about the secret rites and rituals that are being performed within the four walls of Ismaili Jama`at khanas, admission to which is restricted.

The aforementioned defense arguments put forward by the office-holders of Aga Khan's Council have raised some important questions:

1. If the Ismaili Du'as (prayers) recited by the Agakhani Ismailis in their Jama`at khanas are "supererogatory prayers" and not the obligatory prayers, then what about the Command of Allah to observe the obligatory prayers called Salah?

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2. Is the community exempt from this fundamental Command of Allah? If so, who gave them that exemption?

On 9 August 1990, an interim judgment was issued by the presiding judge, Syed Abdur Rahman, in response to the plaintiffs' application for an interim injunction restraining the defendants, pending disposal of the suit. After examining the bulk of the documents filed by the plaintiffs, the judge made the following very critical remark in his judgment, which was also publicized in the local media:

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO CONCEIVE THAT A PERSON CAN
ADOPT PURE AND TRUE ISLAMIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES
AND AT THE SAME TIME REMAIN AN 'ISMAILI AGHAKHANI'.

The pleadings of the plaintiff and bulk of documents filed alongwith [sic]
the same leads to the same inference.

In simple non-legal terms, the judgment by Syed Abdur Rahman clearly states that a loyal Ismaili Agakhani cannot remain true to pure Islamic ideals. In other words, an Ismaili Agakhani is NOT a Muslim from a puritan Islamic view point.

The transcript of the interim judgement alongwith the copies of the court documents filed by both the parties is published by the Ismailia Namazi Khidmat Committee Trust (Regd.). The publication is called Paper-Book of Civil Suit No.331/1986 (262 pages) and is distributed at no cost from Muslim Ismailia Masjid, P.O. Box 8124, Block No.7, F.B. Area, Karachi-75950, Pakistan. The court proceedings are going on and the final verdict is yet to arrive.

Recently, in 1991, Pakistan's National Assembly passed a bill making the Islamic Shari`ah code the country's supreme law. The plaintiffs are now optimistic that a favorable verdict will be issued under the Shari`ah code, and that it will open all the Ismaili Jama`at khanas of Pakistan for the recitation of the Ismaili Du'a as well as the Islamic Salah.

One who forbids —

Seest thou one who forbids —
A votary when he (turns) to pray?
Seest thou if he is on (the road of) guidance? —
Or enjoins righteousness?
Seest thou if he denies (Truth) and turn away?
Knoweth he not that Allah doth see? Holy Qur'an 96/9-14

Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali:

Man's insolence leads to two results: (1) self-destruction through self-misleading; (2) a false example or false guidance to others. The righteous man must therefore test human

example or human guidance by the question, “Is there God's guidance behind it?” And visible light would be thrown on it by the question, “Does it lead to righteousness?” A flouting of God and God's Truth answers the first question in the negative, and conduct which turns back from the eternal principles of Right answers the second.

The usual trick of the ungodly is to refuse to face Truth. If they are placed in a corner, they deny what is obvious to reasonable men, and turn their backs.

UNFORSAKEN ANCESTRAL RITUALS AND BELIEFS

"Caught within the meshes of Hindu Law"

It is an undisputed fact that the converted Khojahs had been observing Hinduistic as well as Islamic rites and rituals, even after their conversion. Many of these converts believed it was in their social and business interest to hold on to their former Hindu identities and continue their trade and cultural relationships with their former kinsmen. Hence, many of them accepted Islam but did not adopt Islamic names or change their dresses. Even today, one comes across Khojah families whose last names are Ramji, Shamji, Kanji, Govindji, and so forth.

John Norman Hollister, quoting from Hamid Ali's work, Customary and Statutory Law, Islamic Culture, XI (p. 355), writes in The Shi'a of India (pp. 399-400):

The Khojah community has been "caught within the meshes of Hindu Law," and to such an extent has "Customary Law" become applicable to the community, that their legal position to-day "is as baffling to the law courts as it is to the Legislature."

1930 A.D. — Aga Khan III favors Hindu custom

When a civil suit was initiated by two Khojah sisters for a share in their deceased father's estate against Aga Khan I, he "upheld the rules of female inheritance as laid down in Islamic law," records Dr. Farhad Daftary (p. 514).

When a suit was filed against Aga Khan III, he went against the Muslim law and favored Hindu custom. Dr. Hollister writes (p. 400):

...in 1930, a suit against His Highness the Agha Khan to set aside a will which provided a bequest of "nearly seven lakhs' worth of property to the Agha Khan, and only a small property" to sisters of the widow and some distant relatives was dismissed. On this occasion the influence of the Agha Khan was against Muslim law, and in favour of "custom" which was Hindu practice.

1945 A.D. — Aga Khan refuses to purge (Hindu) Avtaras from Ismaili prayers

In 1945, under the chairmanship of the late Aga Khan, a conference of Agakhani missionaries was held in Dar-es-Salaam. Aga Khan strongly criticized those who wanted him to eliminate the names of Hindu manifestations (Avatars) and the phrase "Ali sahi (truly) Allah" from the Ismaili Du'a.

Aga Khan explained to his missionaries that such terms and phrases have symbolic significance and, as such, should not be tampered with. Diamond Rattansi has given details of this Mission Conference in his thesis for the M.A. degree at McGill University. He records that as a result of the above decision there appears to have been sporadic manifestation of some opposition to the Aga Khan from the Ismaili splinter groups and the Sunni Muslims.

"The Kur'an is considered the last of the Vedas"

Under the heading "Ismailis," the Encyclopedia of Islam says:

While idol worshipping is condemned, Hindu mythology is accepted. 'Ali is described as the Tenth Avatar or incarnation of the deity, and the imams are identical with him. The Kur'an is considered the last of the Vedas, which are viewed as holy scriptures whose true interpretation is known to the pirs. The religious role of the pir or guru is extolled. Acceptance of the true religion will free the believer from further rebirths and open Paradise for him, which is described in Islamic terms, while those failing to recognize the imams must pass through another cycle of rebirths.

A heresy!

The so called "Badakhshani Ismailis" living in the remote mountain enclaves of northern Pakistan and Central Asia; the "Arab Ismailis" living in Syria; and the "Persian Ismailis" living in Iran, who also recognize Karim Aga Khan as their Hazar (present) Imam and spiritual father and mother, do not fall within the fold of this group of "Khojah Ismailis." Unlike the Khojah Ismailis, their ancestors were not Hindus. They refuse to recognize Hazrat 'Ali ibn Abi Talib as the tenth Avatar (incarnation of a Hindu deity called Vishnu). They strongly resent this dualistic Khojah belief. Any attempt, legitimate or otherwise, to associate or connect physically or spiritually, the Shi'ah concept of "Imamate" with the Hindu doctrine of "Incarnations" would be a heresy in Islam. And they would have no part in it.

"Das Avatar" (the ten incarnations)

Today, the younger generation of Khojah Ismailis, living under the influence of Islamic culture within the Islamic State of Pakistan, do realize and admit that this legendary union of Hazrat `Ali with Shri Rama and Shri Krishna, and the linkage of Revealed Books of the Middle East with the Hindu scriptures, is a heresy.

In Pakistan, because of social and political pressure, a curtain has been officially dropped by the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board on these deluded convictions. Recitation of Ginans containing Hinduistic elements is strictly banned in the Jama`at khanas of Pakistan. But that is not the universal standard for the Ismailis.

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Many Khojah Ismailis living outside of Pakistan are holding on to this fallacious certitude. For them these ancestral beliefs, based upon epic stories, are bona fide truth and the founding concepts of their religion. The Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board in Canada, for example, has been promoting Hindu elements in its seminars, expositions, preaching, and teachings.

Below are some of the reasons why the Khojah Ismailis refuse to forsake their ancestral rituals and beliefs:

1. Until the mid-1950s, Khojah Ismailis living in India and Africa recited in their Du'a (prayer) the names of all the major and minor incarnations of Vishnu, the names of characters from the Hindu scriptures and epic tales.
2. Until the 1950s, the recitation of a Ginan called "Das Avatar" by an upstanding congregation, once a month on a new-moon night called Chandra`at, was a ritual strictly observed in all the Ismaili Jama`at khanas of the world. The book of "Das Avatar" in Gujrati and English, published by the religious institutions of the Aga Khan, was sold throughout the world.
3. Until the 1960s, the verses from "Das Avatar" were invariably recited during the final moments of a dying Ismaili and thereafter at funeral ceremonies. The verses of "Das Avatar" communicate that listening to this Ginan rewards the listener with eternal salvation.

An advocate of Avatar theory may argue: How can the founding concepts of a religion be forsaken? How can the Tenth Incarnation of Rama and Krishna suddenly cease to be an Incarnation after one generation or two? Hence, the Ginans with Hindu elements that lead us to "our heritage" must be preserved, learned, and recited.

Aga Khan's perceptions of "Krishna, and Ram"

Quoted below is a passage from the Memoirs of the Aga Khan (page 174):

All Islamic schools of thought accept it as a fundamental principle that, for centuries, for thousands of years before the advent of Mohammed, there arose from time to time messengers, illumined by Divine grace, for and amongst those races of the earth which has sufficiently advanced intellectually to comprehend such a message. Thus Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and all the Prophets of Israel are universally accepted by Islam. Muslims indeed know no limitation merely to the Prophets of Israel; they are ready to admit that there were similar Divinely inspired messengers in other countries — Gautama Buddha, Shri Krishna, and Shri Ram in India, Socrates in Greece, the wise men of China, and many other sages and saints among peoples and civilizations of which we have now lost trace.

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The Ismaili students' syllabus — 1986

The Ismailia Association, published a syllabus in winter 1986 called the SMREC Student Binder, coordinated by Mrs. Khurshid Allahdini, an Ismaili scholar at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. According to the Confidential Report published by Mehboob Kamadia (p. 105), the syllabus preaches to the mission class students of grade 7 as follows:

He (Pir Sadardin) wrote Das Awtaar, which is still a very important religious book of the Khojas. The concessions made to a non-Islamic Faith to win the followers was never more clearly shown than in this book. The nine incarnations of Vishnu are accepted, and Ali is represented as the tenth, each incarnation being treated in a chapter....Other correlations that are made in the system of Sadr al din are: Brahma with Muhammed, Adam with Shiva, and Ali with Vishnu. Islam Shah, the Imam of the time, became an incarnation of Ali, Nur Satgur of Brahma and Sadr al din himself of Balaram. The five Imams of Alamut (Hasan Ala'Zikrihis Salaam through Ruknuddin) were correlated with the five Pandavas.

The above report, which says "Das Awtaar, which is still a very important religious book of the Khojas," clearly proves the point that the Khojah Imami Ismailis of 1987 have not forsaken the Hindu mythologies. This kind of reporting at the Civil Suit in Karachi had led the judge to pronounce "IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO CONCEIVE THAT A PERSON CAN ADOPT PURE AND TRUE ISLAMIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES AND AT THE SAME TIME REMAIN AN 'ISMAILI AGHAKHANI'."

Bhagavadgita and Aga Khan's birth in India

In the mid-1940s, after graduating from a religious night school in Bombay, I joined a special Mission Class consisting of young graduates, initiated to raise a young breed of Ismaili missionaries. These classes were conducted by one of the Aga Khan institutions named the Recreation Club — the predecessors of today's Shi'ah Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board. The so-called "Recreation Club" was in fact a "Propaganda Club." and was located in one of the Jama'at khana of Bombay.

We, the next generation of propagandists, were expected to memorize a few of the selected verses from various scriptures in their original languages. Here is a verse in Sanskrit from a Hindu scripture that the students were required to memorize:

Yada, Yada, hi dharmasya glaneer bhavti Bharat abhyut'thanam
adharmasya, tadat'mahnam sarjamyaham paritrana shadhunam vinashay
chadushaktam dharm sunsthapana thai sambhawhami yuge yuge

This probably translates like:

Whenever, whenever, there is disintegration of religion in India, and anti-religious activities prevail at that time I take birth to protect saints and ameliorate through religion.

We were taught that in accordance with the recited verse, the long-awaited physical manifestation of the final incarnation had already been born in India. Aga Khan III, the only Imam (a manifestation of Allah in the Ismaili concept) that had been born (manifested) on the soil of India (Karachi, 1877), was the one that would fulfill the words of the quoted scripture. Aga Khan would ameliorate the world and unite Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Aga Khan III died in 1957 without ameliorating India or integrating religions. Ten years before his death, India was partitioned into India and Pakistan. Hindus and Muslims grew further apart than they had been when Aga Khan was born.

'Ali becomes "Eli" of the Bible

Before the advent of the Fatimid Dynasty, a strange doctrine had evolved. Ismailis believed that each and every Prophet that had come upon this earth had had an intimate companion called Asas ("foundation"). Since the Prophet communicated with the members of his community he was called Natiq (a speaker). The companion of a Prophet — an Asas — was called Samit (a silent one). The Asas silently assisted the Prophet in his mission.

Adam's son Seth was an Asas with the Prophet Adam; Shem was an Asas with the Prophet Noah; Ishmael was an Asas with the Prophet Abraham; Aaron was an Asas with the Prophet Moses; initially John the Baptist was an Asas; and later on Simon Peter was an Asas with the Prophet Jesus; 'Ali ibn Abi Talib was an Asas with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon all the Prophets). Every Asas is labeled 'Ali of his era.

The above explanation is necessary to comprehend the philosophy of Ismaili missionaries, who misinterpret the desperate cry of Jesus Christ "Eli, Eli" from the cross and the desperate call "Ya 'Ali adrikni" by Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, on the last day of the battle of Khaibar. According to them, both these calls for assistance by the speaking Prophets were for their silent companions.

The deliberate confusion created by the Ismaili missionaries is totally based upon similar sounding words "Eli" and "'Ali." The Aramaic phrase that Jesus Christ uttered was "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani?" which translates "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27/46).

As for the call by the Prophet for 'Ali is based upon a mythological account of the battle of Khaibar recorded by the author of Noorum-Mubin for which there is no historical evidence. As for an example, Noorum-Mubin records (p. 4) that 'Ali uprooted the heavy iron gate of the fort with his bare hands and placed it over the trench. The gate was short to cover the trench from one end to the other, and Hazrat `Ali held the other end of the gate in his hand. The Muslim army crossed over the gate and conquered the fort.

Prince Aly Khan would ride "Dul-dul"

In August 1930, Aga Khan sent his eldest son, Prince Aly Khan, to visit Syrian Ismailis. He also dispatched a special Farman to his Syrian Jama`at. This Farman was recorded by A. J. Chunara, the author of Noorum-Mubin. (p. 531).

"We are sending our son to you. Consider his arrival as my arrival. We are appointing our Prince as our "Wali-ahad" meaning the successor to our throne."

To commemorate this occasion, a Durbar (royal pageant) was held in Salamiyya. The governor of Salamiyya read Aga Khan's "Holy Farman." Thereafter, members of the Syrian Jama`at took the Bay`ah (literally, a pact, an oath of allegiance) at the hand of the future Imam and offered him Nazrana (gifts). During this visit to Syria, Aly Khan rode an Arabian horse and wore an Arab dress. A photograph of this appears in Noorum-Mubin (p. 530) with the following caption in English:

H.S.H. Prince Aly S. Khan Heir Apparent to Mowlana Hazar Imam, in the Arab costumes of his forefathers, during his visit to Syria.

Ismailis of India, Africa, and Burma celebrated this appointment of Prince Aly with special Majlises and Melawadas. A deputation of Ismaili leaders presented Peramni (special gifts) to Lady 'Ali Shah at her bungalow in Valkesh'war, Bombay, records Noorum-Mubin, p. 532.

In our Mission Class, we were told by the senior missionaries that Prince Aly the future forty-ninth Imam would, during the period of his Imamate, manifest himself before the world as Hazrat 'Ali, the first Imam. On the day of his Zahurat (manifestation), Aly Khan would wear an all-white Arab dress and ride the legendary white horse "Dul-dul." In his right hand would be Zulfiqar, the undefeated sword of Mawla 'Ali. To support their speculation, our teachers would quote a Ginan in Gujrati: Dul-dul gode Ali chadseh Shah....

Setback number 1 for Zahurat

On the 25th day of May 1955, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, G.C.I.E., G.C.S.I., officially signed his last will at the Hotel Ritz, London. In this document (p. 6), Aga Khan stated:

...notwithstanding that under the Shia Moslem Law the issue of a son is not an heir if there be a son alive....

In other words under Shi'ah law, Karim, the grandson, could not be designated as an heir to the throne of Imamate as long as Karim's father or uncle was alive.

On 12 July 1957, the abovementioned will of Aga Khan III was read in his villa in Geneva. It stated (p. 6):

I APPOINT my grandson KARIM, the son of my son ALY SALOMONE KHAN to succeed the title of AGA KHAN and to be the Imam and Pir of all my Shia Ismailian followers....

By his signature on the Will document, the "all comprehensible" Imam had reversed his pronounced decree of "Wali-ahad," broken the admitted Shi'ah law of designation and shattered the dreams of Ismailis who were expecting Aly Khan to manifest as Hazrat `Ali riding on Dul Dul with the sword Zulfiqar in his hand.

"Spiritual father of his own father"

Biographer Willi Frischauer records in *The Aga Khans* (p. 210):

Bettina ...wrote: 'To Aly it seemed that his father's preference for his son was a kind of public humiliation for him... He was never quite the same from that day on. His deep sadness took cover beneath a life of still more inhuman activity.'

...In Bettina's words — which might well reflect Aly's feelings at the time — Karim was now the spiritual father of his own father.

"Shah Aly Khan Hazar Imam Zindabad"

A majority of the Syrian Ismailis and a few Khojah Ismailis of Punjab revolted at this unprecedented designation. They refused to recognize the appointment of a grandson as their Imam. The group acknowledged Aly Khan as their forty-ninth Imam.

To avoid a possible split in the community, Aly Khan went to Syria, met the leaders of the revolting Ismailis, and explained that his father had chosen his son Karim as the next Imam. In Karachi, the leaders of the group gathered outside the residence of Amir Ali Fancy, President of the Federal Council for Pakistan, and began shouting "Shah Aly Khan Hazar Imam Zindabad," meaning; "Long live the majestic Aly Khan, the present Imam."

Aly Khan met the leaders of the group and assured them that he too had accepted his son Karim as the rightful Imam. The revolting Ismailis were left with no other choice but to accept Karim Aga Khan as their forty-ninth Imam. In Ismaili history, Prince Aly will be remembered for his generosity by accepting his humiliation without protest.

Later on, a story began to circulate among his close associates that the Prince had been talking to few of his trusted friends about making a clean breast and testifying before the Jama'at about "divinity and the divine power of the Ismaili Imams," after his initiation. The news may have reached the ears of the late Aga Khan, who might have changed his decision about his son.

Aly Khan's pre-nuptial affair during April 1935 at the Hotel Ritz in Paris with Mrs. Thomas Loel Guinness, the mother of Karim Aga Khan; his marriage to actress Rita Hayworth; and his friendship with Lise Bourdin Bettina, Juliette Greco, Gene Tierney, Kim Novak and other Hollywood personalities might be some of the social reasons for the change of heart of the Aga Khan.

A recent note:

Based upon the recent news published in the newspapers, the Ismaili community is about to face the worst possible crisis in their entire history, on the issue of the succession to the throne of Imam. A crisis that could wipe out the community from its roots in the next generation.

Princess Zahra, who is married to a Christian, could be the future Hazar Imam!

Aly Salomone a child of Mut'ah

In his Memoirs published in 1954, Aga Khan III writes (p. 104):

From 1907 onwards I visited Europe every year,...I had lost my heart to the French Riviera. Now in my maturity my affection for it had deepened and ripened, and I found myself returning to it again and again. In 1908 this affection found a personal focus. I made the acquaintance of Mlle. Theresa Magliano, one of the most promising young dancers of the Ballet Opera of Monte Carlo, a ballerina....She was then just nineteen....In the spring of that year she accompanied me to Egypt and we were married in Cairo in accordance with Muslim law.

Three years after the publication of his Memoirs, Aga Khan signed his will. We find an interesting version of "the Muta form of marriage" in that document (p. 4):

In the year One thousand nine hundred and eight I was married to CLEOPE TERESA MAGLIANO according to the Muta form of marriage....On the twenty-third day of January One thousand nine hundred and twenty-three I went through the permanent form of marriage with my said wife CLEOPE TERESA MAGLIANO in Bombay observing the ceremonials which are customary among Shia Moslems.

Having insisted in his Memoirs published just before his death, that he had married Mlle. Magliano "in accordance with the Muslim Law" the Aga Khan shortly afterwards in his Will admitted that he was married to her "according to the Muta form of marriage" and that fifteen years later he "went through the permanent form of marriage," in Bombay.

Mut'ah "a marriage of pleasure"

Biographer Willi Frischauer writes in The Aga Khans (p. 75):

Although some Muslim writers (among them Mr. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, ^{realpatidar.com} writing in the Aga Khan Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Book, 1945) have

claimed that 'mut'a (temporary marriage)...is, according to Ismaili Law, altogether unlawful...' the Aga Khan himself, supreme arbiter of Ismaili religious practices, obviously did not concur because he mentioned in his Will that he had married his second wife 'by mut'a marriage'.

The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam (Harper and Row, 1989) describes "Mut'ah" (p. 291) as follows:

A marriage stipulated to be temporary, sometimes called a "marriage of pleasure." The marriage is automatically terminated at the end of the agreed period.

Out of this temporary marriage, two sons were born within a period of three years. The first son was named Giuseppe Mahdi Khan, who died in February 1911. The second son, named Aly Salomone Khan, was born in Turin, Italy, on 13 June 1911. Aly Khan's birth certificate describes his mother as "Teresa Magliano, unmarried 22 years old, living on independent means," and his father as "His Highness The Aga Khan, son of the late Aga Ali Shah."

Setback number 2 for Zahurat

In December 1983, an interview with Karim Aga Khan was prominently published by Life magazine, which is widely circulated throughout the world in several languages. In the opening paragraph of the interview, reporter Margot Dougherty wrote: "To 15 million Muslims in 25 countries, he is a living god, direct descendant of Mohammed and the spokesman for almighty Allah."

To the vast majority of Aga Khan's followers, these assertions by Life were a kind of worldwide acknowledgment of their concealed beliefs. For the fundamentalist it was a primary step in the right direction for the public declaration Zahurat. Photocopies of the published interview were prominently displayed on bulletin boards of the Jama'at khanas. Copies were widely circulated among Ismailis throughout the world.

To avoid a backlash of negative publicity from the Islamic Ummah (Universal Brotherhood), Karim Aga Khan immediately disavowed these assertions publicly, through his secretariat. In the February 1984 issue of Life, there appeared a letter from the Secretariat denying in the strongest possible terms both of the above assertions as the most serious misrepresentations by Life and a serious affront to all Muslims. This was a second setback for the propagandists of the Zahurat.

A recent prediction based upon the Qur'an

In spite of this public denial and explicit repudiation by Karim Aga Khan's Secretariat, Ismaili missionaries continue their mission of propagating the legendary beliefs about the Imam's Zahurat. A well-known Ismaili, Da'i Allamah Nasir al-Din 'Nasir' Hunzai of

Pakistan, has recently made a most outrageous prediction in his Urdu book Imam — Shinasi.

Claiming that the word "Nur" meaning "Light" has been mentioned 49 times (it has not) in the Holy Qur'an, the author goes on to unashamedly equate this with the 49th Imam (as per Ismaili claim) and the dawn of the atomic age. By any standard, this so called "dawn" ushered in mainly by the United States and not by Ismailis is one of the greatest threats facing mankind starting off with Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic holocaust.

The book has been translated into English by an Ismaili scholar, Khan Muhammad, under the title Recognition Of Imam. The prediction reads as follows:

Reflect well upon this great wisdom of God, may He be exalted, that the word light [Nur] is mentioned forty-nine times in the Wise Qur'an and our celebrated and glorious present Imam, Shah Karimu'l-Husayni, `alahi's-salatu wa's salam, is also the forty-ninth Imam in the holy succession of Imam in the progeny of the Holy Prophet and descendants of Mawlana `Ali. Thus it is not impossible in the wisdom and power of God that, in this number of word "light," the Holy Qur'an predicts that in the blessed age of the forty-ninth attire of the light of Imam, both the world of religion and the physical world, will be illumined by the spiritual and physical knowledge and wisdom. As is evident that, as a special sign, the atomic age has begun in the blessed age of the present Imam and man has hoisted the flag of victory and success on the moon in order to conquer the universe. Since we are sure of this prediction of the verses of light, that now, by the grace of God, both physically and spiritually, it is the age of light and its reign....

Note: In the concordance of the Qur'an published by the University of California and compiled by Professor Hanna E. Kassis, the word "Nur" (Light) is mentioned 43 times and not 49 times.

Karim Aga Khan's view on Fundamentalism

On 12 August 1991, an interview with Karim Aga Khan was published in the Financial Times. The interviewers were William Dawkins and Edward Mortimer. Here is an extract from the published interview:

Fundamentalism is "divisive of society and damaging to the Islamic world's ability to deal with the modern world," he mourns. But he is confident that Islamic radicalism, almost unknown among the Ismailis themselves, will die away.

It is interesting to note that in the above text, Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism are portrayed as meaning the same thing when they do not.

If one were to examine Karim Aga Khan's own ability to deal with the modern world — managing Europe's leading thoroughbred racing and breeding business, managing first-rate hotels that provide all amenities and luxuries to foreign tourists — one would understand the difference between Modernism and Islamic Fundamentalism. The latter forbids gambling, bans the drinking and serving of intoxicating liquor, eating and catering pork, prohibits seductive stage shows, and so on.

As an ardent defender of the Islamic laws, the government of Saudi Arabia had not in the distant past raided Aga Khan's Jama'at khana in Riyadh, filmed the ceremonies conducted therein, jailed the participants and thereafter deported all his followers from the country, as personae non gratae or non-Muslims, hence, one may be inclined to say, this mourning and death wish!

Causes of the Muslim downfall

On 18 August 1991, an interview with Karim Aga Khan in Granada, Spain, was published in the Guardian Weekly of England. The interviewer was Akbar S. Ahmed. Here is an extract from the published interview:

He [Karim Aga Khan] talks of the loss of vigour, the drying-up of initiative, the emphasis on empty dogma as causes of the Muslim downfall here [Granada]. There are parallels today: "Those who wish to introduce the concept that you can only practice your faith as it was practiced hundreds of years ago are introducing a time dimension which is not a part of our faith."

In the above statement, Karim Aga Khan has in effect repeated the message of his grandfather's Farman published in 1950 by the Ismailia Association for India (p. 241), in which he pronounced that if the Qur'an was self-sufficient in guiding the Mominins (devouts) Hazrat 'Ali would not have been designated as his successor by the Prophet. The Imam of the time is always present to guide the Mominins in the best possible manner, according to the changing times and in view of new discoveries. The Imam's Farmans change with the times, and Mominins ought to obey these Farmans.

The Imam's Farmans have indeed changed the concepts of Ismaili faith and as a result Ismailis have discarded the ancient preaching, including those that are prescribed in the Qur'an, such as ablution before praying, facing in the direction of Mecca while praying, fasting during the month of Ramadhan, pilgrimage to Ka'bah, reciting noon prayers on Fridays, greeting each other with "As Salaam Alaykum" meaning "Peace be upon you," and so on. Should the Islamic Brotherhood follow the footsteps of Ismailis to prevent their down-fall?

However, there is one exception. When the question arises of discarding the Ginanic preaching prescribed nearly seven centuries ago Ismailis defend them as "our heritage." They are not

Dr. Azim Nanji, an Ismaili scholar, writes in his article "The Art of the Ginan Narrative," published in the Imam Day Issue of the Ismaili magazine Hikmat in July 1991 (p. 27): "[Ginans] continue to be preserved, learned and recited as part of a living legacy and an uninterrupted expression of religious teaching and devotion."

Whenever there appears a news item in the media relating to Ismailis, Karim Aga Khan is shown as a religious head of 12 or 15 million Muslims. The figure is grossly over exaggerated. Whoever are feeding this information are either not aware of the true facts or are trying to keep up with the traditional pride of exaggerating the number.

From 20 million to 1 million followers

Harry Greenwall has quoted extracts from several articles written by the Aga Khan III in the British media during the early years of his Imamate. In one such article, quoted on page 46, Aga Khan wrote:

I am a direct descendant of the Prophet, and a large number of the Mohammedan faith to-day, numbering about twenty millions — acknowledge me as their head.

As far as I am aware, no true Muslim would call himself or herself Mohammedan. This was the term that continued to be used by the British to identify Muslims, often deliberately and in spite of the repeated protests by Muslims. The Christians are so named because they happen to worship Christ. Muslims do not worship "Mohammed," a term used by the British for Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace.

In a special "Birthday" issue of Ismaili weekly published on 19 January 1942, the population of those who worship Aga Khan is shown to be 20 million. The figure, which should have multiplied, remained the same after one generation. Today, after two more generations, the figure published in the media has dropped to between 15 to 12 million followers of Karim Aga Khan.

Enno Franzius writes in History of the Order of Assassins (p. 227):

In an effort to ascertain the number of Assassins [Nizari Ismailis] in the world, the author wrote to several Assassin authorities on three continents. Apart from one estimate of fifty million, he encountered a wall of silence. If he were pressed to express an opinion, he would venture the view that press reports of ten to fifteen million are exaggerated and conjecture that the followers of the Aga Khan do not exceed three million.

Even this figure of three million is a serious exaggeration. The true figure is under one million. The stories about millions in China, Russia, etc., have never been substantiated. Indeed, no attempt has ever been made for the simple reason that it would not stand up to even cursory scrutiny.

"Ismailism is the Islamic parallel to Gnosticism"

Under the heading "Isma'ilis," The Concise Encyclopedia Of Islam (Harper and Row, 1989, p. 194) says:

A sect which is usually considered to be a Shi'ite branch of Islam. This classification, however, can be misleading. Isma'ilism's Shi'ite affinities do not constitute its essential element. Rather, it is the metaphysics of Isma'ilism which is its singular characteristic. The sect is a manifestation within Islam of ancient Persian religious systems. Islam gives them an outer clothing, a form, and a vocabulary, but the central core of Isma'ilism is far more ancient.

Isma'ilism is the Islamic parallel to Gnosticism (the alternative Dualist form of Christianity), and is related to Hellenistic pagan Gnosticism, and Manicheism.

Those who pervert the Truth

**Those who pervert the Truth in Our Signs
are not hidden from Us.**

**Which is better? —
he that is cast into the fire,
or he that comes safe through,
on the Day of Judgment?**

Do what ye will:

Verily He seeth (clearly) all that ye do. Holy Qur'an 41/40

Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali:

Pervert the Truth in Our Signs: either by corrupting the scriptures or turning them to false and selfish uses; or by neglecting the Signs of God in nature around them, or silencing His voice in their own conscience. Everything is known to God. Why not work for the true salvation at the final Judgment?

THE PRACTICE OF RECOVERING RELIGIOUS TAXES

Sat-panthi Imam-shahi Khojahs

Nearly two centuries after the death of Pir Sadr-din, one of his descendants, Imam al din `Abd al Raheem became a favorite teacher of the local king, Mahmud Begada (1459-1511). (Imam was his name and not a title or status). He founded his own faith in Gujrat. He became known as Sayyid Imam Shah and his followers as Sat-panthi Imam Shahi Khojahs. Professor Ivanow and several other historians have recorded that it was Sayyid Imam Shah's son, Sayyid Nur Muhammad Shah, who founded the Imam-Shahi faith.

Many historians have used the term "Khojahs" exclusively for the converts of Pir Sadr-din and his son, Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din; and the term "Sat-panthis" for the converts of Pir Imam Shah and his son. But the Ginanic literature tells us that the faith (panth) established by Pir Sadr-din was called "Sat-panth" and hence the converts of Pir Sadr-din were also known as Sat-panthi Khojahs.

Imam Shah died in 1512 at Pirana. His son Nur Muhammad introduced the practice of collecting religious taxes from his followers and keeping the money for his personal use. Pir Sadr-din and his sons would write and sell copies of the Holy Qur'an to meet their personal expenses.

John Norman Hollister records in The Shi'a Of India (p. 359), that these followers of the Imam-Shahi faith "accepted for all practical purposes their Pir as an Imam, by their willingness to have him receive the dassondh." The term Dassondh means religious tax or tithe. Ismaili historians have recorded that Nur Muhammad Shah had declared himself Imam and changed his name to Nar Muhammad Shah.

When this newly founded religious group of Imam-Shahi Khojahs of Gujrat assimilated with the mainstream Khojahs of Pir Sadr-din, the Ginans written by Imam-Shahi Sayyids became canonical Ginans for the Khojah Jamat. It is suggested that the practice of collecting religious taxes (Dassondh or Bukkus) from the converts in the names of Pirs and Sayyids could have also been introduced among the Khojahs at that time.

After the death of Nar Muhammad Shah, several splits occurred in the community. Some of the Imam-Shahis reverted back to Hinduism or adopted Hinduistic rituals, others become Sunnis or Ithna'ashries. Today, the Dassondh is collected and distributed among the descendants of Sayyid Imam Shah. Many of the Imam-Shahis maintain that Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din and his ancestors were in fact Twelver Shi'as and not Imami Nizari Ismailis.

Khojah Momnas of Gujrat

The Momnas of Gujrat are another offshoot of the Khojahs. There are Ismaili, Ithna'ashri, and Sunni Momnas as well. The term Momna or Moomna is derived from the word Mu'min (a religiously devoted person). Momnas were often addressed as Mooman Bhai (devoted brother). Most of the Ismaili Momnas, who migrated to Bombay in the early part of the twentieth century, were very poor. Khojah Ismailis had socially segregated them. There were hardly any intermarriages between Ismailis and Momnas. There were two major groups of Momnas, Mochi Momnas and Khedwaya Momnas.

One of the descendants of Pir Sadr-din, who was known as Pir Mashayikh, was the head of the community in Gujrat, during the seventeenth century. Pir Mashayikh died in 1697 in Ahmedabad as a Sunni Muslim. He in fact sided with Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in his battle with the Shi'i ruler of Bijapur. Like Imam-Shahi Pirs (who were also descendants of Pir Sadr-din), Mashayikh collected religious taxes from his followers and kept them for himself. He had no alliance with the Nizari Imams of Persia. Ismaili scholars say that the Pir was professing Sunnism as a taqiyya (dissimulation).

Pir Dadu of Sind

In the middle of sixteenth century, a man named Daud or Dadu of Sind claimed that he was authorized to act as a Pir. He took charge of the work of Da'wah and collected religious tax. While going through the list of authorized Pirs of the Ismailis, published by Abualy A. Aziz, we do not find the name of Pir Dadu, hence he could have been one of the unauthorized Pirs.

Hollister records (p. 361) that Pir Dadu moved from Sind to Jamnagar in the middle of the sixteenth century. From Jamnagar he moved his headquarters to Bhuj in Kutchh, where he performed miracles. He is particularly remembered by the Khojahs for making it rain at Bhuj. Pir Dadu is supposed to have laid down the three periods of prayers, according to Dr. Hollister (p. 386). Agakhani Ismailis recite three prayers in a day.

Historical data are unavailable

Ismaili historians claim that the descendants of Pir Sadr-din and the members of the Khojah community used to undertake the hazardous journey from India to Persia to see the ancestors of the Aga Khans and receive their blessings. According to these claims, the practice of sending money to the Imams in Persia through Rais (messengers), in leather bags called Jowlis, had been in operation since 1430.

It is indeed very surprising that on the one hand Ismaili historians assert that all the authorized Pirs of the Khojahs that came to India were personally appointed and deputed by the ancestors of the Aga Khans and that these Pirs and Khojahs have made regular visits to Persia since 1430; whereas on the other hand, the same historians express their inability to produce records or dates of the essential social and family events from the lives of these ancestors of the Aga Khan during that period.

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Ismaili historians do not know the years when these ancestors were born, to whom and when they were married, how many children they had, or when those children were born. The only record the historians have is of the years in which these ancestors died.

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Today, we find that even that solitary data is erroneous. The recorded data do not match with the period during which the historical events associated with some of the recent ancestors did take place. In one case the date inscribed on the tombstone differs from the data recorded, by nearly a century.

Under these circumstances it is next to impossible to entertain claims made by Ismaili historians about the visits of their Pirs to Persia, to obtain the necessary authorizations for "Piratan" from these ancestors, and thereafter regularly handing over the Dassondh money to them; and the frequent visits by the Pirs' converts, the Khojahs, to receive the blessings from their Imams, from 1430 A.D. onwards.

Below are a few examples of some of the major controversies that are to be found. The evidence presented are conclusive and as such they raise serious questions about the authenticity of the data recorded and propagated.

1. According to the genealogical chart of the Aga Khan's ancestry published by Ismaili historians and reproduced by Willie Frischauer, the fortieth Imam of the Ismailis, Shah Nizar II, died in 1628 or 1629 in Kahak.

In The Ismailis (p. 498), Farhad Daftary reproduces a photograph of the tombstone of Imam Shah Nizar II in Kahak and writes: "Imam Shah Nizar II died, according to the inscription of his tombstone, in Dhu'l-Hijja 1134/ September 1722, shortly before the Afghan invasion of Persia which extended also to Kahak. His mausoleum is still preserved at the western end of Kahak."

The difference between the two sources is nearly 93 years.

2. According to the genealogical chart published by Ismaili historians and reproduced by Frischauer, the thirty-ninth Imam of the Ismailis, Shah Khalilullah II, died in 1585.

Farhad Daftary writes (p. 498): "Khalil Allah II, the thirty-ninth imam of this line, died in 1090/1680."

The difference between the two sources is 95 years.

3. According to the genealogical chart published by Ismaili historians and reproduced by Frischauer, the forty-second Imam of the Ismailis, Shah Hassan Ali, became Imam in 1661 and died in 1694-95.

Farhad Daftary writes (p. 499): "It was during Hasan 'Ali's imamate that Nadir Shah expelled the Afghan invaders from Persia, and then overthrew the Safawid dynasty and

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proclaimed himself king." Daftary has recorded that Nadir Shah was murdered in 1747 and thereafter Imam Hasan `Ali was killed in 1758-59.

The difference between the two sources is 64 years.

4. According to the genealogical chart maintained by Ismaili historians and reproduced by Frischauer, the grandfather of Aga Khan I, the forty-fourth Imam of the Ismailis, Abul Hasan Ali, died in 1780 in Mahalat.

Farhad Daftary narrates in great detail (p. 502) the incident of Sufi Mustaq 'Ali Shah's death by stoning as an infidel at a mosque in Kirman. The incident happened on Friday in Ramadhan 1206/May 1791, during Imam Abul Hasan and Sufi Master Nur `Ali Shah's absence from the city. Imam Abul Hasan died one year after the above incident in 1792.

The difference between the two sources is 12 years.

5. Willie Frischauer writes in The Aga Khans (p. 46):

One of the Aga Khan's ancestors, Imam Nizar Ali Shah (1585-1629),...joined forces with Nadir Shah of Persia who was Turkish by race and a Sunni.... They fought side by side in many campaigns.

Historical records show that Nadir Shah was born in 1688. He became king of Persia in 1736 and conquered Afghanistan in 1738. He conquered a part of India in 1739 and was murdered in 1747.

The above dates tell us that Nadir Shah, who was born 69 years after the death of Imam Nizar, could not have "fought side by side" with the Imam.

Ismaili scholars discredit Ismaili historian

The following are two typical examples of Ismaili scholars discrediting their fellow historians and authors.

Example 1:

1. Ismaili historian Alimohammad J. Chunara recorded in Noorum-Mubin (p. 94) the tenth Imam's death in 268 a.h. (882 a.d.).

2. Ismaili missionary Abualy A. Aziz recorded the tenth Imam's death in A Brief History of Ismailism (p. 52) in 262 a.h. (876 a.d.)

3. A Syrian Ismaili scholar, Dr. Moustapha Ghaleb discredits both the above accounts by writing in The Ismailis of Syria (Beirut, p. 25): "He [Raziuddin Abdullah, the tenth Imam] was dead in Salamiah [Syria] in 289 a.h. [901 a.d.] and was buried in the middle of the [Mosque]. His tomb is still existing...."

Ismaili Contributions to Islamic Culture, published in 1977 by the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, Tehran, and edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, records (p. 259) that Radi-u-din `Abdullah (Husain) died in 289 a.h./901 a.d.

Example 2:

A Brief History Book of Ismaili Imams, published in Gujrati by the Ismailia Association for Pakistan in 1974 and reprinted in 1975, 1977, and 1980, records (p. 188):

Nadir Shah was a Sunni Muslim by faith. He began the persecution of Iranian Shi`ah Ithna'ashris. Shortly he came to Kirman and began brutalizing the followers of Sufi Tariqah. He imprisoned Hazrat Imam Shah Abul Hassanali (a.s.) and engulfed the entire country with his fire of atrocities.

In 1985, senior Ismaili missionary Abualy A. Aziz discredited the above report by publishing the following account in his book A Brief History of Ismailism (p. 90):

When Na'dir Shah invaded India, in January 1739, he requested the Holy Ima'm [Shah Abul Hassanali] to accompany him in order to bring good luck. The Holy Ima'm went with the Shah but returned home after the conquest of Lahore.

Since the above two accounts confute each other, the question asked is, which of the two accounts is to be trusted? Peter Lamborn Wilson writes in Scandal: Essays in Islamic Heresy (Autonomedia, Brooklyn, 1988, p. 54): "Ismaili history is not to be trusted...."

Aga Khan's attempt to collect religious taxes

In 1829, an attempt to collect religious taxes from the Khojahs, similar to the one made by Pir Nur Muhammad Shah and Pir Mashayikh, was made by the Aga Khan while he was in Persia. He sent his maternal grandmother, Miriam Bibi, accompanied by his special agent, Miran Abdul Kassim, to Bombay to collect the religious taxes from the Khojas. The lady presented herself in the Bombay Jama`at khana as a representative of the "Murshid" but the converts of Pir Sadr-din refused to pay this energetic lady the compulsory dues, in the name of religion. Having failed in her mission, she returned to Persia.

A case was instituted in the Supreme Court of Bombay to get a decree enforcing these payments. The suit was finally dropped in July 1830 because of technical difficulties. Aga Khan denied that the suit was instituted with his permission, records Hollister.

However, there are some historical records from the early nineteenth century that tell us that his followers from Persia and a few from India used to visit Shah Khalilullah in Kehk and offer gifts that they had brought with them. It is not known what percentage of the Khojahs, if any, undertook that kind of journey and what was their concept of Shah

Khalilullah. These followers "often embellish him with the pompous title of Caliph," writes Dr. Bernard Lewis.

Shah Fateh-Ali Qajar, who ascended the throne of Iran in 1798, was the first emperor to recognize Aga Khalilullah, the father of Aga Khan I, as a religious head of one of the groups of Shi'ahs. Shah Fateh-Ali also gave his daughter in marriage to Aga Khan I, who was practicing the Ithna'ashriyya faith. Fateh-Ali died in 1834, and the Qajar Dynasty in Persia came to an end in 1924.

Religious tax becomes obligatory

It is not known when the practice of collecting religious tax called Dassondh from the Ismaili families became obligatory, but it was so until the practice of maintaining records of the payments was discontinued in the 1940s. The minimum payment of religious tax is 12½ percent from the gross income of an individual. It is called Dassondh. Many Ismailis pay 25 percent from their gross income. It is called One-fourth. Dassondh is one of the six fundamental pillars of Ismailism and it replaces the Islamic pillar of Zakat. It is a religious duty of a murid (follower) to pay this amount diligently to one of the representatives of his Hazar Imam in cash in the Jama`at khana, every month. The majority of Ismailis pay their Dassondh on Chandrat (night of the new moon).

Ismailis quite often argue that this is not a compulsory religious tax, that it is a voluntary payment and that there are many followers of Karim Aga Khan who do not pay Dassondh. True, but there are Farmans that speak of calamities that will fall upon those who would keep back Imam's money, the Dassondh. "My" (Imam's) money is like a fire and even a cent if kept with "your" (follower's) money, it would burn "your" money. "I" will come to "you" as a doctor or as a lawyer and collect "my" money. These are the Farmans of the late Aga Khan and they hold good until withdrawn.

Until the 1940s, the records of Dassondh paid (and unpaid) by every Ismaili family were maintained in the Jama`at khana of their jurisdiction. At the time of marriages or deaths in family, these records were inspected by the Mukhis and Kamadias and the ceremonies of "Nikah" (marriage) and "Dafan" (burial) were held up, until the arrears were paid by the head of the family.

I distinctly remember the marriage of my elder brother at Noor-baugh in Bombay. The expensive jewellery, new furniture, appliances, utensils, clothing, etc., received as dowry and gifts from relatives of both parties were physically inspected, evaluated, and taxed at 12½ percent by a salaried Kamadia Ibrahim Jaffar Rattansi of the Chief Jama`at khana, Bombay. My father, who prepared for the occasion by carrying cash with him, immediately paid the agreed amount to Kamadia. After counting the money and putting it in his bag, Mr. Rattansi gave the official permission to recite the "Nikah." Thereafter the wedding ceremony began and the marriage was officially registered by the Jama`at.

Ismailis bury their dead in Muslim graveyards

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In the past, there have been instances in which Ismailis who had been in arrears of their Dassondh payments have had to bury their dead in non-Ismaili (Muslim) graveyards. Once in a while, the sordid episode would then appear in the community magazines, followed by readers' comments. Reading these agonizing reports of a poor bereaved Ismaili going from one Jama`at khana to another, and thereafter from one graveyard to another, was heart-breaking. Some Muslim communities in India and Pakistan do not recognize Agakhani Ismailis as Muslims, and the leaders of those Jama`at would refuse to bury a dead Ismaili in their graveyards.

Today, the new generation of Agakhani Ismailis are not aware of these facts because the missionaries who know of these facts do not want speak of their unpleasant past.

Religious taxes become optional

The practice of maintaining records of religious taxes was finally discontinued when Aga Khan's Estate Office in India developed a serious problem with the tax departments of the newly independent Indian Government. The wealth acquired by Aga Khan III from his followers and the funds donated became a taxable item in the books of the newly formed government. When relations between the minister in charge and Aga Khan became strained, the late Aga Khan decided not to visit India, until the matter was settled by his close relative and chief Estate Agent, Captain Majeed Khan. The matter could not be resolved during Aga Khan III's lifetime. He died in Europe and was buried in Egypt. An undisclosed amount in cash and kind was paid to the Indian Government by the agents of the present Aga Khan.

Since the Dassondh money was and is collected from across the world in cash, large sums are transferred from various parts of the world to Europe. There are instances in the past as well as present, where Aga Khan's Mukhis and agents have been caught and imprisoned for illegal money laundering.

"Money laundering" from Syria

In 1901, three Syrian Ismailis were arrested in Tripoli as they were leaving for Bombay. They were carrying letters and money for the Aga Khan. Following the arrests in Tripoli, Mukhi Sheikh Ahmad and other twelve leading Ismailis were arrested in Salamiyya. More money and correspondence with the Aga Khan were seized from their homes. Emir Tamir Mustafa Tamir evaded capture and was tried in absentia. The prisoners were tried in Damascus in 1903. They were charged with murder, attempted murder, and the use of violence for collecting money for the Aga Khan, record Douwes and Lewis.

These accusations were coupled with others that arose from the religious beliefs of the prisoners and from their connection with the Aga Khan. Three of the prisoners "renounced the doctrine of Sheikh Ahmad." In the late summer of 1903, Sheikh Ahmad was sentenced to death, and the other prisoners to three, ten, or fifteen years' imprisonment with hard labor. In May 1905, the Damascus court reconsidered the case and issued a new verdict condemning all the accused to life imprisonment in a fortress.

Sheikh Ahmad and two of his companions died in prison. In August 1908, all the surviving prisoners were released under the amnesty proclaimed on 24 July 1908 following the constitutional revolution, write Douwes and Lewis.

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"Money laundering" from the United States

More recently, in June 1989, United States Federal Agents arrested three groups of Agakhani Ismailis in Dallas, Seattle and New York, on charges of running an illegal money-laundering that stretched from United States to London and Switzerland, as well as from United States to Canada, London and Belgium.

A total of thirteen Ismailis, eleven men and two women, were charged. Mukhi Nazimudin Alibhai and four other Ismailis pleaded guilty to conspiracy, three days before they were scheduled to go on trial in Dallas.

British authority had discovered that Alibhai had illegally taken more than \$30 million in currency out of the United States between 1985 and 1987, reported Lee Hancock in the Dallas Morning News.

The officials from the U.S. Customs and Internal Revenue Services stated before the local news media that: "The three cases represent the largest money-laundering operation ever uncovered in North Texas and one of the largest nationally."

Mukhi Alibhai's lawyer, Vincent Perini, said that the sect's members are required to give 12 percent to 25 percent of pre-tax income to the Aga Khan, a billionaire resident of Paris. Mr. Alibhai did not report the money to U.S. authorities only because his religion prohibited revealing how much he was carrying. "Traditionally, members of the community literally take the money in the form of cash to the Aga Khan, and traditionally there was secrecy involved."

Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, a law firm of Washington, D.C., in their letter of 8 March 1990 to Bruce Pagel, the trial attorney, wrote: "Our client [the Aga Khan] does not direct or control the system of offerings. The contributions, and their collection, have always been conducted by volunteers from the Ismaili community interested in serving the Imam. These practices date back 1400 years."

In the ranks of those who lose

**But it has already been revealed to thee,
— As it was to those before thee, —
"If thou wert to join (gods with Allah),
truly fruitless will be thy work (in life),
and thou wilt surely be in the ranks of those
who lose (all spiritual good)." Holy Qur'an 39/65**

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Commentary by Yusuf Ali:

The Message of Unity, renewed in Islam, has been the Message of God since the world began. False worship means that we run after fruitless things, and the main purpose of our spiritual lives in [sic] lost.

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GENEALOGICAL CHART OF THE ISMAILI IMAMS

One name substituted with a generic term

According to the Ismaili Constitution and Ismaili doctrine, tradition, interpretation of history, Karim Aga Khan's claim for temporal and spiritual leadership of the Ismailia community is based upon his being a bona fide, lawful, direct lineal (physical) descendant and a designated successor of the Prophet's son-in-law, `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and Bibi Fatima (the Prophet's daughter).

Ismaili historians claim that starting with `Ali ibn Abi Talib, there have been a total of forty-nine Imams and fifty descendants up to the last Imam, the present Aga Khan. The names of these forty-nine Imams are daily recited by the Agakhani Ismailis in the end part of their Du'a. Hence, no Ismaili scholar or historian can dispute or raise a question about their number, their chronological order or the names of these recorded generations.

However, there is one generation whose name does not appear in the Du'a. The name of Hasan II, the enigmatic twenty-third Imam, has been removed from the Du'a and it has been replaced with a common term "Ala-Zikrihis-Salam." Professor Ivanow writes in *Alamut and Lamasar* (p. 28):

In the Ismaili terminology this kind of blessing, "blessing be upon his mention" [ʿala dhikrihis-salam] is used in connection with the mention of the Qa'im, the Ismaili term for Mahdi of the day of Resurrection, who is expected, thus belonging to the future, and his real name still remaining unknown. It may be paraphrased as: "Blessings be upon Him, whatever name He may have."

Names of Imams and their numbers vary

Dr. Hollister writes in *The Shi'a of India* (pp. 331-32):

Lists of Imams are given in *Kalami Pir*, in *Ismailitica*, and from four sources in *The Origin of the Khojahs* by Syed Mujtaba Ali. These vary slightly from each other in the names of the Imams, and also in their number.

The above recorded statement supports the claim, previously recorded, that Imam "Mu'min Shah's name is omitted altogether from the later Qasim-Sahi lists of their imams as well as from the list currently accepted by the Agha Khan's Nizari followers."

Data unknown

One may notice from the genealogical chart given below that data concerning the year of birth of nearly one third of the Ismaili Imams is unknown. Furthermore, Ismaili historians are in disagreement about the year of birth of some of the ancestors of Karim Aga Khan. Not surprisingly, the major differences in the birth years are for Imams 11, 23, 24, and 25, whose legitimacy in the Imamate has been often questioned by non-Ismaili historians.

The Ismailia Association, which has been renamed the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board, is an international Ismaili institution authorized to propagate Ismailism and publish religious literature. The three sources quoted below are either published or recommended by the Ismailia Association.

1. A Brief History of Ismailism. The book has been "highly recommended to High School students by the Ismailia Association for Tanzania," writes the author Abualy A. Aziz. The data compiled are from the third edition, published in 1985 in Toronto, Canada.

2. A Concise Text of History of Ismaili Imams (Gujrati). The data compiled are from the third edition, published in July 1980 by H. R. H. The Aga Khan Ismailia Association for Pakistan, Karachi.

3. Noorum-Mubin (Gujrati). The data compiled are from the third edition, published in 1951 by the Ismailia Association for India, Bombay.

Note: In the following chart, under columns 2 and 3, spaces are kept blank when the recorded year is the same as in column 1. The names of the Imams are taken from a book of Ismaili Du'a published by the Ismailia Association for Africa (1963).

No.	Name of Imam	Year of Birth Recorded by		
		(1)	(2)	(3)
1	Moulana Aly	600		
2	Husayn	626		
3	Zainil-abedeen	659		
4	Muhammad al-Baqir	677		
5	J'afar as Sadiq	702	699	
	Ismailis and Ithna'asharis separated from here.			
6	Ismail	719	unknown	unknown
	Controversies exist about the place and year of his birth.			
7	Muhammad bin Ismail	746	740	750
8	Wafi Ahmad	766	unknown	unknown
9	Taqi Muhammad	790	unknown	unknown
10	Raziyuddin Abdullah	825	unknown	unknown
	Year of death differs between Ismaili sources by 6 years!			
11	Muhammad al-Mahdi	859	873	873
	Year of birth differs between Ismaili sources by 14 years!			
	Start of Fatimid Dynasty in Africa. Qarmatians secede from Ismailis.			

12	al-Qaim	893		
13	al-Mansoor	913	914	
14	al-Muiz	930	931	931
15	al-Aziz	953	955	
16	al-Hakim bi amrillah	986	985	
Year of death uncertain: 1018 or 1021 or 1034!				
17	az-Zahir	1005		
18	al-Mustansir-billah	1029		
Ismailis and Bohras separated from here.				
19	Nizar	1045		
Agakhani Ismailis are also called Nizari Ismailis because they recognized Nizar as their Imam.				
20	Hadi	1069	unknown	unknown
21	Muhtadi	unknown	unknown	unknown
22	Qahir	1121	unknown	unknown
23	Ala-Zikrihis-Salam	1152	1126/27	1114
As per source (1) he died at the age of 14 years; as per source (2) at the age of 40 years; as per source (3) at the age of 52 years!				
24	A'la Muhammad	1155	1147	unknown
According to source (1), he was born when his father was 3 years old!				
25	Jalaluddin Hassan	1186	1166/67	unknown
Year of birth differs by about 20 years!				
26	Ala-uddin Muhammad	ca. 1211	1213	1213
27	Ruknuddin Khair Shah	1228	1230	unknown
Last Imam of Alamut. "Period of hiding" for Imams starts.				
28	Shamsuddin Muhammad	1250	unknown	unknown
29	Qasim Shah	unknown	unknown	unknown
30	Islam Shah	unknown	unknown	unknown
31	Muhammad bin Islam Shah	unknown	unknown	unknown
32	Mustansir-billah	unknown	unknown	unknown
33	Abdus-salam	1456	unknown	unknown
34	Ghareeb Meerza	unknown	unknown	unknown
35	Abuzar Ali	unknown	unknown	unknown
36	Murad Meerza	unknown	unknown	unknown
37	Zulfiqar Ali	unknown	unknown	unknown
38	Nooruddin Ali	1513	unknown	unknown
39	Khalilullah Ali	unknown	unknown	unknown
From #33 to 38, there were 5 generations within 57 years!				
40	Nizar	unknown	unknown	unknown
41	Sayyed Ali	unknown	unknown	unknown
42	Hasan Ali	unknown	unknown	unknown
43	Qasim Ali	1675	unknown	unknown
44	Abul-Hassan Ali	unknown	unknown	unknown
45	Khalilullah Ali	1749	unknown	unknown

46	Hasan Ali	1805	1804	1804
	Year of death differs by 1 year.			
47	Ali Shah	1830		
48	Sultan Muhammad Shah	1877		
—	(Aly Salomone Khan)	13/06/1911		13/06/1910
	Declared "Heir Apparent" by the 48th Imam in 1930.			
	But in the final Will, his son Karim was declared the 49th Imam.			
49	Karim al-Husayni	1936		
	Place of birth uncertain. Could be Paris or Geneva.			

Is there any way out?

**They will say: "Our Lord!
Twice hast Thou made us without life,
and twice hast Thou given us life!
Now have we recognized our sins:
Is there any way out (of this)?"
(The answer will be:)
"This is because,
when Allah was invoked
as the only (object of worship),
Ye did reject faith,
but when partners were joined to Him,
ye believed!
The Command is with Allah,
Most High, Most Great!"**

Holy Qur'an 40/12-12

Commentary by Yusuf Ali:

When exclusive devotion is not rendered to God, there is no true understanding, in the mind of a creature, of his own true position, or of the wrong of the Divine Will and Purpose. How can he then hope to achieve the purpose of his life, or obtain God's Mercy, which is the only way to obtain release from the consequences of Sin?

At the Judgment, the matter will have passed out of the stage at which further chances could have been hoped for. But in any case God is High above all things, Great above all that we can conceive of, both in Mercy and Justice. The Decision will be with Him, and Him alone.

May Allah guide everyone to the right path.

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I am greatly indebted to all the authors, publishers, and scholars whose works I have quoted in this book. I gratefully give them my sincere thanks and recommend that their works be read to learn more about the subject. I have generally quoted passages from the most recent works of these authors, but there are other publications by the same authors written over a period of time.

Years of research, hard labor, extensive travelling, and persistent efforts have produced some magnificent works on the history of the Ismaili Imams, Pirs, and Da'is and their preaching, especially by authors like Professor W. Ivanow in the past and by Dr. Farhad Daftary, a distant relative of the Aga Khans, in the present.

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Jazakum Allahu Khairan.

Author

<http://www.mostmerciful.com/>